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AN EXPERIMENT IN ALTRUISM



4087

AN EXPERIMENT IN ALTRUISM

BY

ELIZABETH HASTINGS

"The world, which took but six days to make, is like to take six thousand to make out."—SIR THOMAS BROWNE.

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1895

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AN EXPERIMENT IN ALTRUISM

CHAPTER I

"WHEN Tantalus," said Janet, "was standing in the water that he could not reach, and was dying of thirst, a Philosopher came by. 'Don't you understand,' said the Philosopher, 'that what you want is *water?*'"

"What do you mean by that?" I asked, turning to look at the girl's face. Her colour was shifting quickly in the cool October air.

"I mean," she answered, with her lips curling into her wickedest smile, "that I have been talking with my cousin Paul. He explained, with an air of giving information, that what I need is faith."

"Your cousin Paul," growled the Doctor, "has a most remarkable way of dis-

covering what the rest of us have always known."

"Did you always know that?" asked the girl. "I had an idea that you thought I needed a tonic."

"There's the 'brotherhood of man,'" the Doctor went on. "Your cousin Paul thinks that he has discovered or invented the 'brotherhood of man.'"

"Don't you mean," I suggested, "that he discovers and acts upon what the rest of us have always known without letting it make any particular difference?"

"I cannot see that he is trying any harder than the rest of us to find out how to treat his neighbour," said the Doctor. "Living in the slums is as comfortable nowadays as living anywhere else. At least, it is at Barnet House. That has as good appointments as any house in the city."

"Good plumbing isn't quite everything," I ventured to say.

"Those university men who go to live with the poor are too supercilious," said

the Doctor. "They patronize humanity. And the 'cousin Paul' doesn't stop there. He patronizes the Creator, too. He is constantly reminding the Creator that He is being recognized by one of the first families."

Janet laughed. "You are clever," she said, "but you aren't polite. Paul does bend over a little in his efforts to help. But his mother's son could hardly avoid that. Think of the family!"

"The whole thing is artificial," continued the Doctor. "Your cousin goes to live in a tenement, tries to become intimate with its inhabitants, and carries up his own coal. He could never realize that it would be just as lofty a course of action to carry coal in his own house in Endicott Square, and to become intimate with his barber!"

"That would not be picturesque," said Janet.

There was a pause.

"You say he patronizes the Creator," mused Janet. "Wouldn't it be better to

say that he interprets God and patronizes man? I think that I dislike the former more than the latter. He is so sure of his beliefs. And he is so puzzled to know how any one can doubt what he believes."

The Doctor changed the subject with, "What you want is some work to do."

The girl's smile vanished, and her face grew bitter.

"What's the use of working," she demanded, "when it doesn't mean anything? You can never do the thing you want to do. You can only do what somebody else wants to do. I am tired of succeeding in other people's ambitions."

"You haven't had a great deal of experience of that kind, have you?" asked the Doctor.

She did not listen. "The world is buttoned up wrong," she said, "just one hole wrong. I get what you want, and somebody else wants what you get. I believe that hopes were given to us simply in order to hurt. The gods must enjoy dangling before our eyes, just out of reach, the

things we pray for. Probably they like to see us clutching the air."

"Do you know how to ride a horse?" asked the Doctor.

"Yes."

"Then you had better do it, and let the gods alone. There is one good thing about being on horseback: you can't despair. If you do, you fall off."

Here we reached my door, and I went in. I paused for a minute, to watch the two women going down the street, — the Doctor, with her free, even step; the girl with quick, irregular movements.

It seemed to me that Janet was the most inexplicable of all the inexplicable people I had met since my arrival, six weeks ago. Something must have hurt her cruelly. She saw all life in the light of her own pain, and she rebelled against the suffering whose ultimate meaning she could not understand.

Yet now, with the sunlight in her warm brown hair, she looked, in her radiant colouring, like a symbol of all the joy and gladness in the world.

CHAPTER II

I HAD come to a strange city, to do a peculiar work. At last — and I was thirty-nine years old — I was free to render humanity the service I had always wanted to give.

So I took up my Cause. What special cause it was there is no need to say. It was one of those that are never won while the world sins on, and yet are never lost.

The city was new to me. Its streets, its spires, and its sky were all strange.

But not so strange as its ideas. I found that I had come to a centre of new notions, and that my scheme was only one of many for the salvation of mankind. All that was most advanced was represented here: new faiths, new co-operative experiments in trade, new revelations of the occult.

The men and women that I met filled

me with astonishment. They were all self-conscious and introspective. Most of them were brooding over wrongs, — the concrete wrongs of others, or their own abstract injuries, in a world that hid from them the great secret of existence. And they were all devising ways and means to correct the misdeeds of man and of God.

Perhaps it was the many theories that lent a kind of unreality to the life in the streets. I used almost to wonder if it were a pantomime, arranged to illustrate our ideas. Something certainly made the thoroughfares and the houses in the city look like scenery in a play, and I was always half-expecting them to fold up and move off the stage.

The street on which I lived was especially theatrical. Opposite was a house consisting of one Gothic tower; the stucco houses next, with their low windows and gabled roofs, suggested Nürenburg. Near by was a studio building, guarded by two carven lions; and round the corner stood a huge armoury, with a machicolated roof.

It all looked like a mediæval background, prepared for the tumult of a play.

But the tumult never came. Nothing ever disturbed us there except great thoughts.

If it had not been for the Cause, I should have been lonely. Not that it was especially companionable, but that it made me acquainted with the Doctor and the Altruist, and, in fact, with all the other people, except the Lad, and the Man of the World, and the Butterfly Hunter. They were at my boarding-place.

The Altruist was Janet's cousin Paul. It was he who introduced me to Janet, and to her namesake, little Jean. They lived opposite in one of the gray stucco houses. Jean was a year-old baby, and her godmother a young woman of twenty-four.

I used often to see them together upstairs, Jean's yellow head shining against her aunt's brown hair. I liked to think of them as I went wandering with my ideas about abstract humanity through this visionary town.

CHAPTER III

THE Altruist was terribly in earnest. He considered our social system all wrong, and he wrote and lectured and preached about it constantly.

He lived in one of the city slums.

The morning after my arrival I went down to the East End to ask him about his work. I had heard much about him. He had left a home of great beauty to go to that sin-stricken corner of the city, and the fame of his sacrifice had spread abroad.

I found him nailing a board to the steps of the tenement-house where he lived. He greeted me cordially, holding out a small, shapely right hand in welcome.

The house stood in a row of tall tenements, near the terminus of an elevated road. All round it the streets were

swarming with children, Russian and Jewish children, dirty, ragged, and forlorn. Some of them were kicking dirt toward the Altruist's clean steps; others were eyeing him with respectful curiosity.

"What do you do down here? How can you help?" I asked when the Altruist had seated me in his study. It was in the rear of the building, on the ground floor, and it looked out into a densely populated court.

"Do? Oh, very little actual work. I just live, for the most part," he answered, smiling.

He still held in his hand the hammer with which he had been working. I watched him closely, as he sat in the rough wooden chair in the bare, uncarpeted room.

He was a small man, with vivid blue eyes and dark hair. There was a touch of excitement in his manner, and I thought I detected in his face a certain dramatic interest in the situation.

"I live quietly in my rooms here," he

continued. It was hard to hear his voice above the noise of the court and the roar of the elevated trains. "There is no organized work that I am attempting. I have even given up my church, in order that no machinery may interfere with my purely human relation to my neighbours. I am trying simply to lead a normal life among my brethren. I study; I make calls and receive them. There is nothing extraordinary in the situation. I merely choose my friends, and choose them here, instead of up-town."

I glanced at the hammer that the Altruist's hands were clasping nervously. A look of exultation crept into his eyes.

"Yes, I repair the doorstep," he said. "That I do not do up-town. But somebody has to do it here. I am willing to do anything that will convince my friends here of my desire for good-fellowship."

The pathos of this unasked service touched me. It was full of the everlasting irony of zeal; the queer achievement mocked the great design.

"But do you not feel a little at a loss," I asked, "as to what to do next?"

"Does one feel at a loss in De Ruyter or in Endicott Square?" demanded the Altruist, defiantly.

"I have come down here because I have seen great misery, —misery of poverty, misery of sin. I have cast in my lot with the victims of our civilization. The awful condition of these people is the result not only of their transgression of the laws of God, but also of our transgression of the law of Christ. Our whole social and industrial systems are built up on the law of competition, the law of beasts, by which the greedier and stronger snatch the portion of the weak."

The Altruist had clasped his hands over the end of the upright hammer, and was leaning his chin against them. His voice had taken a high key, and it sounded as if it came from a long way off.

"These people are weak, and are trodden under foot. They are trodden under our feet, and their blood is on our garments."

He spoke solemnly, and his eyes gleamed with the look of inspiration that the world's fanatics share with the world's saints.

"But," I stammered, with a half-guilty feeling, "your being here does not bring these people bread."

"It does not," said the Altruist, "but it brings a little beauty into their lives. I share the work of the residents at Barnet House. We have clubs of all kinds. We have musicales and art exhibitions. There is much that is definite in our effort."

Looking up, I caught sight of some Burne-Jones pictures on the roughly-plastered walls of the study.

"Isn't it like trying to feed a hungry lion with rose-leaves?" I asked.

The Altruist's face lighted up.

"It is not what we do that is important," he said. "We stand for an eternal truth. Barnet House and my study here are only symbols of our faith. They have inestimable value, not in our petty achievement, but as a declaration of the right

of our fellow-man to our sympathy and love."

I listened with interest as my host proceeded to set forth his criticism of society and to unfold his plans for its reform. He talked brilliantly.

The race fell short of its grandest possibilities, he said, in losing its hold on abstract truths. Devotion to an ideal was forgotten in the adjustment of human lives to one another, rather than to something above and beyond them. In attempting to solve minor concrete problems, society had dissipated all energy for lofty thought.

In confiding to me his ideas for reconstruction the Altruist talked of human life as if it were something in which he did not share; as if he stood apart from its real issues, apart, and higher than his fellows, to whom he reached down a helping hand.

His conversation enabled me to understand his face. It was full of a fierce enthusiasm, which life had not yet tamed.

I found myself saying: "But your life

is ascetic. In your devotion to an idea you sacrifice too much; you are like monks."

"Not at all," he maintained. "We take no vow. Our life is wonderfully broad and free. Instead of being bound by mere individual experience we share the lives of all."

I wondered that I had not thought of this before.

"The usual existence of married people," he said deliberately, "with its narrow, selfish interests, seems to me, especially in the case of women, largely animal. They cannot know the higher joys of service to one's kind."

It was strange to hear these opinions coming from the rounded, childlike lips.

"There is no reason," he went on, "why families should not come down here to share their lives with the poor. That would be in some ways a better solution of the problem than Barnet House, or my solitary effort. Surely it is the duty of the cultured, to whom much has been given,

to share of their abundance with those who starve."

"But the children, —" I suggested. "It would not be possible to bring up children in such associations."

"I sometimes think," said the Altruist, "that a further sacrifice is necessary in order to wipe out the sins of our forefathers. Perhaps, in order to be free for this great work, it is the duty of the race to abstain for a generation from bringing children into the world, — for a generation or two," he added dreamily.

"That," I assented mentally, as I rose to go, "would certainly be effectual."

CHAPTER IV

THE Man of the World (I shall introduce my friends in the order in which I met them; it is not artistic, but neither is life) — the Man of the World was fourteen years old.

I made his acquaintance in this wise.

One night I went down early to dinner. As I waited in the parlour for the bell to ring, a portière was drawn, and there entered what I supposed to be a little boy. He was so short, chubby, and round-faced that at first sight he looked younger than he was. I bent over, saying graciously as I held out my hand, —

"I wonder if you will tell me your name?"

When he looked up I realized what I had done. Evidently a mistaken world was in the habit of confusing smallness of stature with lack of experience.

"I beg your pardon?" was all he said, but the touch of dignity in the childish petulance of his tone rebuked me. That was the last time I ever patronized Morey Steiner.

The chill in the atmosphere was not dispelled even when he was formally presented to me by our hostess.

At dinner the Man of the World and I sat side by side. It was not until I asked him if he cared for Jefferson's Rip Van Winkle that my disgrace was retrieved. Dramatic criticism was the child's strong point, — one of his strong points.

He told me that he thought Rip Van Winkle rather amusing. Then he asked me if I did not consider the knife-whetting business in Irving's Shylock rather stagey. The part that he cared for most of all was Mr. Mansfield's Beau Brummell.

Yes, he went to the theatre a great deal, sometimes with his father or his sisters, sometimes alone. That was his father, those were his sisters. His mother was dead. The family had just come to the

city, and they were going to stay at this place until they found a house to live in.

I saw that his father represented money, and, looking down at the worldly-wise scrap of a lad at my side, I realized what wealth and American civilization can do for the very young.

"Did I play cards?" he asked suddenly. "No? Perhaps his brother would teach me when he came. His brother played well."

The end of the dinner interrupted our discussion of horses. It also interrupted the Man of the World in the act of storing away nuts and candies in his pocket. He was glad I liked riding.

"Perhaps," he said, drawing my chair back for me (the Man of the World was a perfect gentleman — at times) "we can have a ride in the park together some day."

Presently I found myself watching him as he conversed with my hostess' daughter in the parlour. The round face was heavy when he was silent. When he talked, it

lit up with precocious intelligence. He had a *blasé* air, as of one who is permanently weary of many things, and in his blue eyes I saw gleams of the knowledge of good and evil. The child was old, — as old as the serpent in the garden.

He was destined to much mortification that night. My mistake was repeated with emphasis by another boarder, an elderly gentleman in black.

He chucked the Man of the World under the chin when the latter rose politely to say, "Won't you take my chair, sir?"

"Thank you, thank you, little boy," said the old gentleman, "and who might you be?"

We all suffered for a moment. Then the child said, —

"I *might* be the Prince of Wales, but I am Morey Steiner."

CHAPTER V

SOMETHING at last became real to me: that was the misery of the poor. It seemed sadder than anything else in the world, except the misery of their benefactors. I could hardly tell whether, in this great tragedy of poverty, it was actor or spectator who suffered most.

I saw on the one side hunger, sin, ignorance, and they weighed down upon me like a nightmare. I became familiar with the crowded quarters of the city, where the population was nine hundred to the acre. I knew the inside of great shops, where women worked and starved on two dollars a week.

On the other side I saw brave attempts to help, that were yet half futile. There were charities, religious and secular; relief-giving societies, working into the hands of

general organizations; there were settlements among the poor. But they all fought against frightful odds. The lot of many who were trying to help was to look and suffer, impotently.

A kind of morbid fascination drew me continually to the foreign quarters. I liked the picturesqueness of the crowded streets, where women in gay head-dresses chattered, holding their babies in their arms. I liked the alley-ways lined with old-clothes shops, and the corners where Russians, Italians, Germans, Jews congregated, talking, laughing, quarrelling. The quaint children in old-world garments interested me; and the aged, wrinkled faces of men and women roused often a feeling of remembrance, as if I had known them somewhere, in book or picture.

The most crowded district was near the sea. A broad thoroughfare called Traffic Street skirted the city at the water edge. On the outer side were enormous warehouses and dock-yards; on the inner, tall tenements.

Looking between the great buildings, I caught sudden glimpses of blue water, with my old friends, the white sea-gulls, floating overhead. And often, in coming down rickety tenement-house steps, from scenes that left me sick and faint, the sight of tall masts of ships thrilled me with their inevitable suggestion of freedom and escape.

I had begun to feel that the misery of it was greater than I could bear. Then suddenly the Lad appeared.

CHAPTER VI

THE Lad was a great comfort to me.

I had for several days been conscious of the presence of a new-comer in the house. He was a young Southerner, with fine dark eyes, and extraordinary alertness of body.

There was something in the stranger's face that pleased me. Perhaps it was his resolute mouth and a certain air of high-mindedness. Perhaps it was only the boyish way in which his soft hair waved back from his forehead.

I called him "the Lad," because he looked so young by the side of the Man of the World.

One day as I was talking with my friend, the Butterfly Hunter, I was startled by being told that the Lad had done some brilliant scientific work, and had already made for himself a reputation.

"He is only a boy!" I exclaimed.

"He is a man of twenty-seven," said the Lad, who had come in unnoticed.

After that we became acquainted rapidly.

I had never seen anybody so keenly alive. He was eager, restless, quivering with vitality. There was a kind of ferocity in his way of working; he was busy finishing a book, with a name occupying two lines. I do not yet know what it means. And he walked every day for miles, coming home hungry and tired.

I found myself trying to classify him. I had fallen into the habit of classifying everybody. Was he more interested in his own soul, I wondered, or in the oppression of the working-man?

My astonishment was very great to discover that he rarely thought about his soul, and that he was not trying to reform anything.

This was partly because he was so busy. His whole effort was centred in his work, and everything else was crowded out.

"I feel the strength of my youth upon

me," he said one day, "but I have done so little, and the days are so short."

Before I knew it I was taking long walks with the Lad, by the bridges over the tidal river north of the city, or eastward by the shipping and the sea. We watched the sailing of out-bound vessels, and the landing of emigrants from returning ships.

He told me about his father and his sister. He talked, too, a great deal about his work, insisted on talking about it, although he knew that I could not understand him.

I presently came to be a kind of maiden aunt to him. I gave him advice on various matters. I introduced him to Janet and the Doctor and the Altruist, who all regarded him as a new and interesting specimen.

The longer I knew him, the more he cheered me. There was something in his very presence that was like the coming of the young west wind.

CHAPTER VII

"Her device, within a ring of clouds, a heart with shine about it." — BEN JONSON.

"BUT what do you do it for? You can't help. You only harrow up your own feelings." It was Janet who spoke, perverse, unhappy, winsome Janet, sitting in a tall, old-fashioned chair at the side of her little tea-table.

"I suppose that it is better," I answered slowly, "to have one's feelings harrowed up over other people than over one's self."

"That's a very neat thrust," said the girl. "Thank you. Do you know what the Doctor says about all this reform-scheming and theorizing?"

"No."

"That it is all 'shoveling-fog.' That is a 'longshore expression. Don't you like it?"

"Very much," I said. "But doesn't it suit as well any kind of talking, even the discussion of the 'Is-life-worth-living' question?"

"You must have been doing some especially good deed," said Janet, leaning her pretty head against the back of her chair and looking at me through half-shut eyes. "You are so disagreeable. There isn't any soil that philanthropy thrives in so well as in the ruins of the social and domestic virtues."

"Child," I said, "I did not mean to be personal. Why don't you stop thinking, and try to find shoes and stockings for some of my poor people?"

Quick tears sprang into her shining eyes.

"'I sometimes think it were best just to let the Lord alone;
I am sure some people forget he was there before they came,'"

she quoted. "I do not know what the poor have done that I should descend upon them as a last affliction. First, dirt; then

a financial crisis and no work; then hunger and cold; and then I. It is like the plagues in Egypt."

I leaned back in my chair, powerless. It was becoming evident to me that no one could solve Janet's problems for her.

"It would be cowardly," she said. "Because I am unhappy, should I try to work off my ill-humour upon the poor?"

"They might like to look at you," I suggested.

She was making tea, and she stopped, holding a dainty cup in her right hand, to look up at me. That face, whose expression changed so often, baffled and fascinated me. The mouth curved often into cynical smiles, but the eyes were the eyes of a dreamer. At times Janet seemed to me a child. At times she bore the weary expression of one who has fought many battles and has won but few.

"No," she said. "I am one of the people whose agnosticism absolves them from all action. You know the type. We

find it difficult to get up in the morning or to button our boots because we cannot comprehend the infinite. Really, agnosticism makes a very soft down cushion on which to recline at one's ease."

"Don't you sometimes get tired of thrusting arrows into yourself?" I asked. "It must be hard to be a St. Sebastian where you have to be persecutor and martyr too."

"Please don't make epigrams," said the girl. "It is a sign of degeneracy. I am sorry to see you beginning to show traces of it."

"I thought perhaps you would not understand me if I did not try to speak in epigrams," I answered meekly.

Janet rose from her chair and came over to stand at my side, brushing back, with kindly fingers, a lock of hair that had escaped from under my bonnet.

"But to go back to the question of good works," she said. "It seems to me that it is useless to try anything. Listen. When I was twelve years old I wanted

to do some work for the city charity organization.

"They sent me to take two aprons to a woman on Harrow Street. 'It was quite safe,' they said. So I went down through the dirty street into an inner court, and began to climb the stairs. It was perfectly dark; it was unutterably filthy.

"The woman, I found, lived in the garret, and, after the last flight of stairs, I had to climb a ladder to reach her. In the loft at the top of the ladder I saw, — I shall never forget it! — a woman diseased, shrunken, helpless. Half her face was withered and gone; she was cold, hungry, dirty. Two miserable little girls were crawling around her, crying.

"And I stood there stupefied, unable to speak, unable to grasp all the horror before me. I could do nothing for them. I only stared, helplessly, and petted the little girls. Then I gave that bed-ridden woman the two gingham aprons and came away.

"That scene made an impression upon me that I shall never lose. Since then,

all the charity work I have heard of has seemed as ironic as that. Such misery is hopeless. Something deeper than human misdeeds must be the cause. I cannot help it; I cannot help believing that we are the sport of the gods, who sit behind the curtain and laugh at our hurt."

In the pause that followed, Janet went to the window, forgetting to put down the empty cup that she had taken from me.

Suddenly she turned to me, with her chin raised in defiance.

"Moreover," she said slowly, "I don't want to forget my own life entirely in the lives of other people. I want it all, the pleasure and the pain of it, the whole cup down to the dregs."

There was nothing for me to say; I rose to go.

"What do you think of the Lad?" I asked.

The girl's face brightened. "He is interesting," she said. "He is so different. It seems to me that he is the only one of us who is really living. The rest of us are merely talking about it."

CHAPTER VIII

WHETHER she went driving in royal state under her white carriage robes, or watched from the nursery window the people passing below, or stood in her little night-dress on her brass bed before being tucked in, Jean was always adorable.

One day I took the Lad to see her.

He had already called at the house a number of times, but Jean had never been brought down to the parlour.

Perhaps he had never before been acquainted with a little child. I saw him watch every motion of her yellow head as she sat on the floor, looking solemnly at the people about her. Jean was a grave baby.

Presently she lifted her hand and very earnestly pointed one tiny finger at the Lad.

I had seen her do this many times. It was her usual way of expressing approval of a new acquaintance. But the Lad had never seen it, and to him it meant, "Thou art the man."

He begged to be allowed to take her up. As he lifted her, his face flushed.

I did not tell him that she clung to him so closely, and refused so peremptorily to go to any one else, partly because his arms were so strong. Jean liked the grasp of firm muscles. To the Lad it seemed that her obstinacy was only love for him.

He would not go home. Sitting before the open fire, he gazed at the child on his knee, and ignored all my glances.

Jean looked at him steadily for a long time, her hazel eyes meeting his of darker brown. Then she played with his watch-chain. Presently she was induced to display all her accomplishments. She pointed to her feet when they were named, to her eyes, her hair, and even, 'by request,' to her tongue.

Sitting there and watching them in the shadows of the firelight, I could not help thinking how much alike they were.

Jean played until she was sleepy; then she yawned, and the Lad laughed to see the tears come into her eyes.

By and by her head nodded; she was almost asleep. Not content with her position, she crawled up, as she did with her father, and put her head down in the Lad's neck, then went to sleep with one helpless hand hanging over his shoulder, the other softly patting him.

The Lad started when she put down her head; then he held her close.

It was partly the way in which his arm curled round her, and partly the light from her fuzzy hair that made them look like the Murillo picture of Saint Anthony and the Christ-child.

When I went over to take Jean away, the Lad looked up, and I saw that his eyes were moist with tears.

They were faithful lovers after that. Jean used to watch for him from the win-

dows upstairs, and sometimes when she saw him coming she would smile.

He called often, always asking for her. (This was partly because he did not dare ask each time for Janet.) And the child was carried downstairs with her arms stretched out impatiently to meet him.

One night he arrived when she was asleep, but her mother sent for her. The nurse came in softly, cradling the child in her arms. Her yellow hair was wet and curly about her face; below her white night-dress hung one baby foot.

The Lad bent down and kissed it.

CHAPTER IX

My fellow-philanthropists talked much of the "Settlement Idea." Its adherents maintained that the world had not yet seen any self-sacrifice so beautiful as this attempt to share the lives of the poor by living among them. On the other hand, members of old, thoroughly organized, comfortable societies for doing good pronounced the new methods extremely vague.

I wished to see for myself.

Before I had visited Barnet House, the settlement of university men in Brand Street, a similar house was opened by young college women in the West End.

The Altruist went with me to Barnet House on Wednesday afternoon, when the residents always had a musicale or a reading for their friends in the neighbourhood. As we drew near the house and saw the

white curtains and green plants in the window, shining out from among the dirt-begrimed tenements, I said to myself (my mood being severe) that it looked pretty, but sentimental. I tried to remember who had called this kind of effort to elevate the slums "a philanthropic picnic in a wilderness of sin."

We were ushered by a tall young man into a great sunshiny room that was full of easy chairs and books and pictures.

This was one of the residents, the Altruist said in introducing him. He would doubtless be kind enough to tell me what I wished to know.

"The Settlement Idea is very simple," said the Resident, in answer to my questions. He spoke with an air of dignity that seemed too old for him. "A number of people who wish to help the poor find a house, put it into good sanitary condition, and go to live there together, doing some independent work, and some work in common."

"But what kind of work?" I asked.

"Pardon me, — I can understand why you come, but not what you do when you get here."

The Resident apparently did not notice the touch of discourtesy in my remark.

"The Settlement," he said, looking hesitatingly toward the Altruist, "serves two purposes. It is a station for philanthropic work, and also a centre for social investigation."

"What is social investigation?" I asked bluntly.

To my delight the young man laughed. "That is a quotation from an article I am writing. It sounds rather bookish, doesn't it?"

"It is a very good sentence, — for an article," I admitted.

"Why, you see," said the Resident, his eyes twinkling, "social investigation means drains and foods and that kind of thing."

"Yes?" I said inquiringly.

"And immorality and crime and amusements. Also wages and causes of popular

discontent. In fact, it embraces almost everything."

The mingled audacity and shyness of the boy's manner were very winning. I was becoming interested, but the Altruist looked deeply pained by this lightness of tone.

"How is this work carried on?" I asked.

"By visits," said the Resident briefly, "and statistics."

"You go out from here to make the visits upon the poor — "

"And then we make the statistics," he interrupted, "and publish them."

Suddenly he became grave, and in doing so made himself seem ten years older.

"You look sceptical," he said. "I am myself, sometimes. But, seriously, I think that this thing is worth doing. We come because we are really interested in these people. We are interested in all kinds of ways. One man here is doing regular missionary work. Another is writing a book about the reasons for unsanitary liv-

ing in the slums, and is investigating the condition of every tenement in the East End. There's a literary man here, looking for material. He goes around getting local colour, but he helps, too, and isn't so useless as he might seem to be."

"Helps in what?" I asked.

"In the collective work done by the House," said the Resident. "We have all kinds of clubs, — literary, political, and scientific. You see, though each man is doing his own private work, we have organized effort. It isn't all exploration. However, I believe I made our twofold object clear in that opening sentence.

"Then there are art exhibitions and lectures. We invite our neighbours to come to hear music, and to come to take baths. We charge five cents for the baths. The music is free. We have dinner parties too, and receptions. You ought to see the costumes that the East End can turn out. A Brand Street swell in his evening dress is a sight for gods and men."

"I don't see what you talk about," I

said. "Your guests must be hard to entertain."

"Oh, we talk about dime museums and Tammany and the things that happen in the streets. That's when we are adapting ourselves to our guests. Then we show them pictures, and talk about high art and literature. That's when we are adapting our guests to us. It's immensely elevating for them, immensely, just to talk with us."

I found that my objections to the Settlement Idea were vanishing rapidly before this young man's sense of humour.

"It really doesn't do the people down here a great deal of harm," he was saying, "and it does us a great deal of good."

"Is your interest in the practical or in the theoretical side of the work?" I asked.

"In the latter. I am a student of economics, and have just taken my Ph.D. degree. Lately," he added, flushing, "I have become a Socialist."

The Altruist looked pleased.

"The state of things down here has

convinced me that an entire reconstruction of our whole industrial system is the only thing that can help the poor."

I asked him if the misery of the poor had not been much exaggerated in the sensational reform journals.

"It could not be exaggerated," he said vehemently. "No, the half has not been told."

As he recounted tale after tale of the sin and suffering caused by unrighteous laws of trade, I sat numb with that sense of personal hurt that one feels on first knowing that these things are true.

But the Resident stopped, for the bell rang, and a "neighbour" entered.

The other residents came in; several more guests arrived, and the Altruist, who had been unusually silent for the last fifteen minutes, became the centre of a group of listeners.

One of the callers was a Salvation Army captain, whose regiment was passing through the city. One was a street-car driver. He had half an hour off, and

had come to ask the time of a lecture to be given that night. Mrs. Milligan, the washerwoman who lived next door, ran in with her youngest boy. Then came a lady from Endicott Square, in a superb Parisian gown.

We conversed most amicably in the intervals of the music. When this was over, a domestic appeared with a tray, and the literary man made tea.

Before I left I had a few more words with the young Socialist.

"There's no use talking," he said earnestly. "However little direct practical good we do, there is no doubt that our opportunity is great for investigating. It is obviously better to study the working of economic laws in society itself than in books. I am trying to get acquainted with the working-people, and look at their grievances from their point of view. Socialism has been treated entirely too much from the standpoint of the scholar and the fanatic. I want to work in a more practical way, getting at the new political economy in the making."

I came away quite willing to allow any number of young men with Ph.D. degrees, and honest enthusiasm, and a saving sense of fun, to live in the slums.

But I did not admit this to the Altruist.

CHAPTER X

AFTER a first visit to the settlement of young women in the West End I found myself going there very often. The gracious friendliness with which I was met attracted me strongly, and I became more and more interested in the social experiment.

This new house was not in the slums. It stood in one of the old city squares, whose aristocratic inhabitants had long ago drifted away, leaving empty rooms for the families of mechanics and poorly paid clerks.

Life here was gray and monotonous. Into it my young girl friends had rushed, with little knowledge of its actual conditions, but with a firm determination to change them for the better. This kind of poverty did not mean starvation, they said, but something worse: dearth of culture, of beauty, of ideas.

They were all political economists of the school of Ruskin.

The residents numbered ten. Some of them were girls fresh from college; others were women who bore marks of years of brain-work. At their head was a slender, dignified lady, who, after ten years of academic life, had resigned a college professorship in the classics for the sake of closer contact with humanity.

All phases of the activity in the house soon became familiar to me.

Sometimes I found the doors stormed by crowds of eager children, waiting the moment when the ladies should permit them to enter, that they might deposit pennies in the bank, or take books from the library.

Once I watched a Mothers' Meeting conducted by a fair-haired girl of twenty-two.

I visited the boys' clubs, and realized that the rough lads were learning courtesy, and much besides.

Certain evenings were purely social.

Then we conversed, or listened to music, or read stories aloud. On these occasions I learned many useful things from the "neighbours," about house-keeping, and the bringing up of children, and even about politics.

One shabby little woman, whose husband had marched away with an industrial delegation to present a petition to Congress, told me that a terrible revolution was coming in which the working-man would at last gain his rights by means of powder and shot.

It would be hard to tell all the ways in which these young collegians "drew nearer the People": through medicines given out by the resident physician in the dispensary downstairs; through presentations of Mrs. Jarley's wax-works, and of scenes from eighteenth century comedy; through the lending of cook-books and of treatises on philosophy.

Once I even saw a resident taking care of a neighbour's baby while the mother went shopping. The young philanthro-

pist told me, however, the next time I saw her, that she had resolved not to dissipate her energy in that way.

But nothing else edified me so much as the evening discussions on problems of the day. The young women were even more eager than the men at Barnet House to walk in step with great popular movements. Some of them were fairly well equipped for practical economic study. Others were collecting statistics with the most engaging ignorance.

Every week, a club devoted to the study of social science, the "William Morris League," met at the Settlement. On these evenings the head of the House sat, Lady Abbess fashion, with nun and novice at her side.

And men and women from various trades-unions, cigar-makers, street-car drivers, cotton-spinners, garment-workers, a motley group, listened to a paper on (perhaps): "How to form Protective Unions among Under-Paid Women."

For the deliverance of the working-

woman was the hope that lay nearest the Settlement's heart.

I always went away from these discussions with feelings of mingled pride and amusement. These were strong and earnest young women, inspired by no wish for notoriety, but eager to help and to understand.

Yet it was a queer world, where the maidens formed trades-unions, and young men were making tea!

It was very good tea.

CHAPTER XI

THE only serene face among us was that of the Butterfly Hunter. The eyes of the Altruist were clouded by the wrath of denunciation; the Lad's were full of unfulfilled desire; and my own, I knew, were troubled: they had been for so long a time a mirror for pictures of sorrow. Into Janet's face crept more and more often the puzzled expression of those who mistake their own bad moods for philosophic thought.

But the Hunter of Butterflies wore a look of peace.

I mistook this at first for the peace of attainment. It was not that: he was still pursuing — pursuing his butterfly.

He was, they told me, a noted entomologist. Many years ago he had discovered a very rare butterfly, the *Erebia winifredæ*.

He had classified and named it, but had never been able to follow its entire history. With the scientist's fine sense of the importance of the least details he was still studying it.

This winter he had come to the city in order to work with a member of the faculty in the university. They were attempting to raise the insect under artificial conditions, and were carefully watching its growth.

The difficulty of observing it in its home is very great, for it can be found only during certain portions of the year, and at great altitudes. It lives in the Himalaya Mountains, and in the Caucasus, just below the snow-line, in the bleak regions of rock and sedge.

I heard the story of its discovery. Years ago, when the scientist was young, he had gone with an exploring party through India to the southern side of the Himalayas. On one long walk he lost his way, and found himself at the bottom of a deep gully, whose walls were apparently too steep to climb. He was alone.

There was nothing to do except to scale the cliff. It was a perilous journey. After hours of painful struggle the young man reached the top, in a state of utter exhaustion. By a last effort he drew himself up over the edge of the precipice, and lay fainting for a time, prostrate on the rock.

When he woke, he found under his outstretched hand a little dark butterfly, with gold dust on its wings. It was his butterfly, and it made his name famous.

Every summer since that time he had climbed to the limit of vegetation, and had camped there on desolate mountain sides for weeks, watching the butterfly's growth. He knew where and how it laid its eggs. He knew on what it fed. He had watched it change from grub to winged creature, and yet it baffled him.

He could not find out the length of its life. The seasons of warmth at the altitude of its home were short, and a part of its existence was passed in seasons when he could not study it.

He had brought home a collection of

specimens with which to experiment. A room upstairs was devoted to them. Several times I was invited to enter.

I liked to watch the Butterfly Hunter as he bent his gray head over the cocoons. He was a tall man, and slender and lithe as a boy, from much walking.

That kindly, weather-beaten face puzzled me. I could not tell whether or no traces of passionate human experience lay hidden under the look of absorbing interest in the specimens he held in his hand.

He would bend over the little gray winding-sheets, touch one with his finger, reverently, then look on in silence.

His butterfly!

CHAPTER XII

THE Lad did not tell me how deeply he was interested in Janet. He simply talked about her a large part of the time when he was with me. At first it had been the book that filled his thought; now it was Janet and the book.

Perhaps he did not know how far he was taking me into his confidence. Perhaps he did not care.

Janet puzzled him. "I don't understand," he said one day when we were taking one of our long walks. "She seems to be an absolute pessimist, and yet she takes a strong interest in some things."

"For instance?"

"Well, in gowns." He spoke unwillingly.

"She would not have any right to be a

pessimist about her gowns," I said. "They are too pretty."

Here the Lad shot past me with his long stride. He had a way of forgetting me for a minute, and of walking swiftly ahead. He always turned and came back to apologize, and yet I objected decidedly to this phase of his absent-mindedness. It was hardly deferential, I thought, to a person of my years.

"You walk," I said, when he paused to beg my pardon, "as if you had air in your bones. You must be related to the birds."

"I was thinking," he said, "and I forgot. I was thinking how strange it is to find women facing the newer criticism and making up their minds on religious matters. In the South they do not do it. They are all orthodox. It goes with being a woman."

"I wonder why?"

"Partly because it is expected of them. Most of the men I know want their wives to take the beaten paths, no matter how far they themselves have strayed from them. Marriage of that kind doesn't

seem marriage to me. I want my wife — if I ever have one — to share all of my life, the intellectual part of it as well as the rest.

"That's one thing I like about your friend," he continued, apparently unconscious of the connection of ideas. There was a great deal of the scholar's *naïveté* about the Lad. "She is so broad-minded. She looks at things as fairly and impersonally as a man does."

I changed the subject abruptly, for I perceived that the Lad was going to say more than he meant to about Janet.

"How did you reach your present position?" I asked, for lack of something better. "You are an agnostic, I suppose?"

"In religious matters, yes," he answered. "And the reason is, that after I had been trained in methods of scientific thought, dogmatic thought became impossible. All the theology I know anything about is founded on arbitrary dogma."

"To an outsider," I said slowly, "science seems at times dogmatic. Are not

its sceptical conclusions out of proportion to its actual achievement? You scientists deny beyond your power to prove. Kingsley convicted you once for all in the argument about the water-babies, and he did it by your own methods. You have 'no right to say that God does not exist until you have seen him not-existing.'"

But the Lad thought I was trifling.

"You are mistaken," he maintained. "Genuine science neither asserts nor denies where it cannot prove. It is silent about the ideas of God and of immortality, because it cannot find any basis for scientific reasoning. It is magnificent, — that reverence that keeps it from making great unprovable statements about things in general. Oh, think of the patience with which scientists study the least things, and the self-control that keeps them from drawing conclusions before they have reached them, and the splendid faith with which they go on working!"

The Lad's eyes glowed with enthusiasm.

"Of course, my present position is not

final," he added. "I expect to go on. I have tremendous faith in doubt."

"You are creative even in your doubting," I reflected.

"Of course." said the Lad. "Otherwise there would not be the least use in doubting."

I told him that I had never known disbelief so eager and enthusiastic. Agnosticism, as I had watched it, had weakened the whole moral fibre. With Janet, for instance, loss of faith in God had meant loss of faith in herself and in everything else.

"I can't understand that," said the Lad. "The feeling that the old ground is slipping from under me makes me want to gird up my loins and start to find new.

"But there is a terrible amount of suffering in the mental growth of the race," he continued, after a pause. "I can stand the loss of the hope and comfort in the old ideas, but I can't stand the pain that my changed belief gives my poor old father. I could have kept still, but that seemed hardly honest. So I tried to make

him understand, and he was very badly cut up."

"And your mother?" I asked.

He had never talked about his mother. He was silent for a minute. We were on one of the great bridges over the river, and we stopped to watch the spires, the gray roofs, and the one gilded dome of the city across the shining water.

"My mother," he said at last, taking off his hat and standing bare-headed in the cold November air, "my mother is where she understands. She died when I was a little fellow."

Where she understands! I smiled, but the smile brought tears to my eyes. They all went back, these wise young people who had outgrown the faith of their fathers and mothers, — they all went back to it in moments of supreme emotion, and rested in it, like little children.

Naturally, I did not point out to the Lad his lack of logic. I knew that he was going to speak again of Janet, and I waited. Presently the remark came.

"Such splendid power, and all wasted! That girl could do anything that she wished to do. There is a kind of impotent idealism in her that keeps her from acting. She refuses to see the difference between the absolute and the relative. She can not, or she will not, see that if she is to have the ideal in this world she must work it out in the actual."

"Wait," I said. "She is young. Now she is only a question mark. But this uncertainty is a phase of her development. Something positive will grow out of the mood of denial."

"If something could only rouse her," said the Lad; he had forgotten that I was there, — "could sting her into life. If something could only make her *care!*"

CHAPTER XIII

"If they only had a little common sense," the Doctor grumbled, "there wouldn't be any dilemma."

"Which?" I asked. "Your poor family or the charities?"

"Both," was the answer. "If the Ebsteins had any common sense, they would not be in this plight; and if the charities had any, the family would have been helped long ago. The rarest thing in the world is common sense."

"How did you find them?" I asked. I always liked to ask this. The Doctor was continually taking care of people in trouble, and as continually trying to conceal the fact. "It is simply for practice," she always said. "My visits among the poor are only a kind of clinic. If it weren't for the interests of science, I'd never set foot in the slums again."

"Did you ever find among them any of the valuable abnormal cases you are looking for?" I asked once.

"No," she answered, "but I might. I am always expecting to."

"How did you discover the Ebsteins?" I asked. It was a new charity "case," and I took a professional interest in it.

"I had a patient in Snow Street, in a basement, — an old woman with rheumatism."

"What interesting scientific discoveries you must be making there," I murmured. "Chronic rheumatism is no doubt very instructive."

The Doctor looked severe.

"A woman came down from the second floor, and said that there were some people on the fifth that needed help. She asked me if I came from the Charity Building," said the Doctor, in disgust. "I can stand a great deal, but I cannot stand being mistaken for a philanthropist."

"You ought to be more on your guard," I suggested. "You really put yourself into

positions where it is difficult to discriminate."

"I climbed the stairs to the very top of the house, and knocked at the only door I saw. 'Herein!' called somebody. Then I found myself in a room full of children. No, they are not Mrs. Ebstein's. She rents a little hole in the wall from the woman, a German, who lives in this room. The only passage to the inner apartment is through the outer one.

"They opened Mrs. Ebstein's door, and there sat two children —"

"How old," I asked.

"About twenty. Oh, they are grown up and married. They looked like Babes in the Wood, but they are man and wife. The woman is a little thing with her hair in two braids down her back. The man was sitting with his arms on the table. He had been resting his head on his hands; he looked up when I entered, and was dazed at first, then embarrassed. He is a nice, honest German boy who ought to be at home in the *Vaterland* with his grandmother."

"What did they come here for?" I interrupted.

"To starve," said the Doctor. "America is like a great almshouse with no endowment. She opens her arms to the poor of all nations, and says: 'Come here and die.' Luckily we have room enough to bury them all in."

"How did you begin to talk with them?" I asked. "What is the best way of beginning? Do you suppose these people resent being intruded upon as we should?"

"I simply held out my hand," answered the Doctor, and said: 'Is this Mrs. Ebstein?' I spoke in German. The little woman burst out crying. She had been crying before. Then I said: 'Somebody told me that you are in trouble. What can I do for you?' She only pulled her husband's sleeve and said: 'Heinrich, Heinrich! Komm mal, sprich!'

"I found out that they are German Jews, 'aus Berlin.' They came here more than a year ago, just after their marriage. The man is a brass-finisher. He had a job,

when he first came, and worked for six months, I believe. Then the work shut down. Since then they have lived on little or nothing.

"They have really almost starved. I glanced at a roll lying on the table, and one of them told me that for weeks they have lived on bread. Their landlady is too poor to help them. They have both tried to get work of any kind, and have failed.

"'They said we could make gran' fortune in America,' said Mrs. Ebstein. 'Look! this is my fortune!' and she took two pennies out of her apron-pocket and shook them. 'We eat these! After that we starve!'

"She is a vivacious little thing. When she talked she was inimitable. Her eyes — she has bright brown eyes — twinkled, and she forgot that she was hungry. She was telling me about her experiences in trying to get work."

"Give me their address," I said, "and I will report them to the Good Samaritans."

"No," said the Doctor, quietly, "I want to take care of them myself. Will you help?"

"Certainly," I answered. "They are very interesting. Only you should have found them in a garret. Something is lacking in your background. It isn't artistic."

"There was altogether too much background," said the Doctor. "Nearly all the inhabitants of the tenement house swarmed up while I was there, and all of the landlady's children came as far into that tiny room as was possible. No, the lonely garret exists only in story-books. Its seclusion is too good to be true. The worst feature in the lives of the poor is that they have to be born and to die in public.

"Now that I think of it," added the Doctor, rising and looking at her list of calls, "do you think that you could get a baby's wardrobe together for Mrs. Ebstein?"

CHAPTER XIV

"Into our hands hath it been given to settle the course of the world." — *Shah Nameh*, FIRDAUSI.

WE were a committee — the Doctor, Janet, the Altruist, and I — to consider what could be done for the women and girls in Brand Street. The Altruist wished us to undertake some work in connection with Barnet House.

We sat round the table in the parlour of my boarding-house. The cloth had been removed. A block of paper and a pencil lay in front of each of us, ready for taking notes.

"I like the way we have," said Janet, who looked the incarnation of the spirit of mischief, "of trying to teach other people how to live because we do not know how ourselves."

"You and I have not erred very deeply

in that way, Janet," said the Doctor, drily. "You must not accuse yourself where you do not deserve it."

The Altruist looked impatient. "We want to consider," he said, "how we can help our friends in Brand Street. We must begin at once. I have an appointment at four."

"Another lecture?" asked Janet.

"Yes," answered the Altruist, wearily. "I get invitations almost every day to lecture on life in the slums."

"Paul," said Janet, solemnly, though her eyes were dancing, "you will be talking in the park next on Sunday afternoons, and we will all come and stand with the crowd to listen to you."

"Perhaps I shall," said the Altruist. "If it is necessary to convince the working-man of my sympathy, I shall be glad to do it. I should like to see my up-town friends standing side by side with my neighbours from the slums. Only," he added thoughtfully, "I doubt if my voice could carry. I have said definitely that I will not speak to more

than three thousand people. And in the open air — "

Then we opened the discussion. Janet suggested that we begin with private theatricals for the poor.

"They need to have their minds taken off their troubles," she said. "We cannot really better their condition. Perhaps we can divert their attention."

The Altruist withheld his opinion of this idea. He did not wish to discourage Janet. It was partly in order to give her a practical interest that he had started the work. But an expression came into his face that made Janet whisper, —

"It really is not polite, Paul, to look bored when other people are talking."

"We want to accomplish something that will be of permanent service," he began. "Mere temporary distraction will not do. I thought that you three women would know how to bring them something of the graciousness and sweetness of your own lives."

"How can we effect anything whatever,"

asked the Doctor, "while those women live under the conditions in which they must live? They cannot even keep clean. It is absolutely impossible. Cleanliness is the most expensive luxury in the world. What beauty and graciousness can be brought into their lives so long as they cannot take baths?"

"We cannot correct at once," the Altruist answered, "all the evil consequences of our present system. But we can bring these people into touch with higher spiritual ideals —"

"We can form clubs," I hastened to say, wishing to appease the Doctor by means of a practical suggestion. "We can teach the women to sew, or we can have a literary club and teach them how to read."

The Altruist's face brightened.

"Yes," he said, "these cruder methods open the way. When our neighbours understand that we want to meet them on the common ground of human brotherhood, that we ignore all class distinctions —"

"Don't you think," asked the Doctor,

eyeing the Altruist sharply, "that you create class distinctions in order to wipe them out? I thought that the idea of any class distinction ran counter to the principles of American democracy."

"It is impossible to ignore the fact that the distinctions do exist," answered the Altruist. "The lines of caste are just as exclusive here as in Europe."

"And are you willing to forget them, and to tell those people that you meet them on terms of absolute equality? I think that you will do it," smiled the Doctor, "just as long as you are not taken at your word."

There was something about the Altruist that made him superior to petty annoyance of this kind. He was not angry.

"We can convince them of our sympathy, we can share with them our faith and our aspiration," he said gently.

"My faith and aspiration would be a great support to them," murmured Janet, her lip curling in self-scorn. "No, cousin Paul, just at present the relations between

Providence and me are a little strained, and the greatest service I can do the world is to hold my peace. There is no command to go into all the world and preach the interrogation point."

After beating the air for this length of time we began to work, and in ten minutes had formed a plan for a woman's club. It was to meet every week at Barnet House. It was to be a literary club, carried on by reading and by lectures. Once a week there was to be a social evening.

"We must have a party at least as often as that," pleaded the Altruist. "Our parties are a great success. The neighbours do so delight in lemonade."

"In short," said Janet, "we will elevate the masses by Swinburne and *frappee!*"

We reproved her for her flippancy, and proceeded to work out the details of our plan.

CHAPTER XV

I TOLD the Man of the World the story of a business failure in the East End. The sufferers were two very tiny Italian boys, joint proprietors of a fruit-stand. An unexpected season of warm weather had proved bad for bananas, and the firm was insolvent.

I was right in thinking that the Man of the World would be interested in hearing of this, and I described the situation to him in much detail.

The Man of the World and I had become great friends, and he had taken me into his confidence. I knew all about the money that he made at cards. A set of his brother's friends had taught him to play poker, and were in the habit of amusing themselves by letting him win. I knew too about the horse that he had

bought without his father's knowledge. He kept it in a stable near the park, and rode it every afternoon.

"I have to work a bluff game to get there," he said one day, "but I get there just the same."

He told me about his young lady acquaintances. Evidently he had several who admired him much. Two embroidered pillows and an elaborate photograph case were proudly displayed by him as trophies of conquest. One day, however, he had a bitter quarrel with his prettiest girl friend. It was, I believe, about a bag of popcorn. After that he was very satirical in regard to the entire sex, and had no communications with any member of it except myself. "There are no women in it for me any longer," he said darkly.

When I asked him if he would like to hear the story of my latest "case," he responded that it would give him great pleasure.

Then he regarded me for a minute with a judicial air.

"What is it you do with people, anyway?" he asked. "I don't understand."

"Oh, a great many things —" I began.

"I wonder if you're like my Sunday-school teacher. She's awful good, she is really. She goes down to the Traffic Street wharves and picks up drunken men and converts 'em. Do you do that?"

"No," I answered.

"Well, could you?"

"No," I admitted, "I do not think that I could."

But in spite of the confession of inferiority on my part, he paid close attention to my tale.

"How old did you say those kids are?" he asked when I had finished.

"Seven and nine," I replied.

"They're game ones, aren't they?" commented the Man of the World.

He went over to the window and stood there, thinking, for a few minutes.

"If they had any money, do you think they could start up the business again?" he asked.

"Probably."

The Man of the World thrust his hand into his pocket and drew out a roll of bills, which he offered me, sheepishly.

"We had a game of poker last night," he said, "and I scooped in — I mean, I won. Take it, will you, for the little beggars? I don't need it. I'm flush, and can ante just as well as not."

CHAPTER XVI

OUR second committee-meeting left us spent and weary. In making our programme we began to question the wisdom of presenting to working-women the scepticism and doubt and denial of modern English literature. We wandered off into a wilderness of abstract questions, and, as usual, lost our way.

Suddenly the door opened, and the Lad strode in.

"I beg your pardon," he said, retreating.

We urged him to enter, saying that our work was done.

He brought with him the freshness of the open air. A wave of cheerfulness swept over us, and we remembered that the sun was shining out of doors.

"It is a glorious day," observed the Lad. "I have just come in."

"I must go out for a walk," said the Doctor, rising.

The Altruist followed, and Janet would have gone, but the Lad looked at her entreatingly.

"Oh, don't go!" he begged, with no perception of the fact that his remark was embarrassing. "I have so many things to say to you."

To my great surprise the girl smiled and lingered. When Janet chose to be gracious, she was very gracious indeed.

I kindly took up my notes to make out the minutes of the meeting, and my young friends seated themselves by the window.

"You all looked rather blue when I came in," remarked the Lad.

"We were," said Janet. "We had been talking of the future of the human soul as argued by Tennyson, and assumed by Browning, and ignored by Swinburne. You see, we can't decide whether to teach the lower classes doubt or conviction."

The Lad was too much in earnest to notice the irony.

"I don't see why you are all so troubled about a life beyond this," he said. "Immortality isn't the question, is it, while we have this world on our hands?"

"It is at least very human," the girl answered, "as we cannot conduct this life properly, to ask for another and a larger one to spoil."

"But this one is so satisfactory!" cried the Lad. "The mere delight in breathing is enough, if we cannot have anything else. I don't feel the need of metaphysical certainties so long as I can feel the pulses beat, as they do beat in my wrists."

"What if your physical joy in living should change into physical pain?" asked Janet, gravely.

"Suppose we talk of something else," suggested the Lad. "We never get anywhere in discussing questions like this."

"Except into corners in the argument," retorted Janet, smiling maliciously. "You are in one now."

"Well, I'm very happy there," laughed the Lad.

That was only too evident.

They stayed, talking eagerly of Heaven knows what, until the sun went down. It made a golden background for the profiles outlined against the window-pane. Stray locks of Janet's hair were touched into sombre brightness, and the colour in her cheeks grew warm and red.

The Lad was gazing at her with softly shining eyes.

CHAPTER XVII

ONE Sunday afternoon I went to hear the Altruist lecture on the book of Job.

He had converted a Brand Street dance-hall into an auditorium, and the popular lectures he gave there drew many followers to his feet. He spoke with equal power on social, on religious, and on literary themes. Young working-men flocked round him to hear him set forth the wrongs of our present system of government, and the better things to be. Night after night the hall was crowded by men and women of all ranks and all occupations, who watched with untiring interest his treatment of positivism, agnosticism, atheism, Schopenhauerism, and his triumphant exposition of a belief that they are all recognized and transcended in the creed of the Anglican church.

I can see him now, if I shut my eyes, — a nervous little figure behind the low desk. There was a curious glint in his eyes, which were always looking over and beyond the heads of his audience. I can see, too, the eager, stricken faces of his hearers. They drank in his teachings with consuming thirst.

I have heard him speak many times, but I have rarely seen the eyes of one of his listeners removed an instant from his face. A kind of mesmeric power held them. There were questionings and rebellious objections before his arrival, or after his departure, but never in his presence.

I remember the comments made by two young granite-cutters one night before his lecture, Lecture X., in the "Exposition of Contemporary Thought."

"I can't for the life of me see," said one of them, "how he can believe all this 'ere science and evolution and believe in Genesis too. 'Spose he'll answer if I ask him?"

"Try," said the other. "If he can't answer your question, he'll turn it into

something he can answer. He'll talk, anyway. And I'll bet a dollar you won't know but what he's talking about the thing you asked him."

But that very night the two young sceptics were smitten down. The Altruist pronounced their questions ignorant and crude, and explained the apparent contradiction in his beliefs as a part of the eternal paradox at the heart of all things.

I invited Janet to go with me on this particular Sunday, but she refused.

"I think that I would rather not hear Paul expound Job," she said.

"He will do it brilliantly," I suggested.

"Too brilliantly," she laughed. "He talks so wisely of all human experience that you suspect him of never having had any of his own. He stands condemned by the amount of wisdom that he can utter concerning life which he has not shared. You feel that it all came from books."

"But perhaps he will not deal with Job's emotional experiences. The lecture may be

purely abstract. Don't you like to hear your cousin philosophize?"

"No," said the girl, "I don't. Paul finds the universe easy to explain, but I mistrust his logic. To quote, I have forgotten whom: 'Corner him in an argument, and he escapes out of the window into the Infinite.'"

So I went alone. Before the Altruist had been speaking five minutes I regretted that Janet had not come. He was alluding to other great rebels of literature, — Dante, Prometheus, and our own Carlyle, — souls stung by hurt into war with God, and afterward fighting their way through to a bitter peace.

There was a hush. Then we heard Job talking with God. His upbraiding of the Creator thundered through the room.

The impression given cannot be translated into words. The audience was swayed by the Altruist as grass is swayed by the wind.

Who had not known moments like that, when one arraigned God for hiding his

meanings from the eyes of men? That time of negation was necessary, leading, as it must, to affirmation. It was only a season of darkness, breaking into clearest light. Soon insight followed blindness; conviction followed doubt. Uncertainty could be only temporary with noble souls. For them the fog cleared, and a universe of order rose from chaos. They would suffer no longer the clouding of the intellect, or know the rebellion of the heart. Their cry was answered, and reason grasped the scheme of things.

Of this sure knowledge, universal expression had been given in the formulas of Anglican belief.

As the Altruist expounded the final relations of Job to the Creator, and explained God's thought for man, the sudden illumination was blinding. For a moment the ultimate meaning of life and of death seemed ours.

The audience crowded round the Altruist to utter words of gratitude. One or two women wiped their eyes, and working-

men of known sceptical tendencies came forward, with a certain shame-facedness, to grasp the Altruist's hand.

I walked home alone in the early winter twilight.

There was no one in the parlour except the Butterfly Hunter, who was sitting by a western window, with a sheet of sketches from his specimens lying on his knee.

It was too dark to see clearly any longer. The old scientist had forgotten his drawings, and was watching one great star in an orange patch of sky between two dark lines of cloud.

"It is strange," he said, half to himself, half to me, as I seated myself in an easy chair, "that truth, the least truth, is so hard to find. We buy it dearly, and with long effort, and then we do not understand the whole of it."

He rose and brought his pictures to me.

"I have been studying that little creature," he said, "for forty years, and yet I know nothing of the beginning or of the end of its life. It begins in mystery; it ends in mystery."

CHAPTER XVIII

I COLLECTED for Mrs. Ebstein a wardrobe of tiny garments. Some of them were Jean's outgrown clothing. Some of them I made myself, sitting alone in my study in the early winter evenings.

It was almost Christmas time when I took them down to Snow Street. I too climbed the long flights of stairs, and passed through the noisy room where the seven children lived.

I found Mrs. Ebstein in her room alone. When I opened my bag and gave her its contents, her face shone. She grasped both my hands and gave me a great kiss.

"You are so good toward me!" she said in broken English. "You make so much trouble for me!"

Then she stroked the little socks. "Wie niedlich! Wie reizend!"

We talked for some time in bad English

and worse German. When at last I rose to go, Mrs. Ebstein took both my hands again.

"I did not know," she said, "but you are so good, — and I am ganz allein! No sister, keine Mutter. Will you come mit the doctor-lady when she comes?"

And smiling to see into what strange paths my endeavour to serve humanity was leading me, I promised. She was so young; she was so far away from home.

Her child was born on the night of the twenty-sixth of December. I went down in the afternoon with the Doctor; and all night long I waited and watched, in the outer room, from which the seven children had been banished.

The Doctor and the district nurse cared for the patient.

Sitting out by the fire, I hung the little flannel robes again and again in the warmest place, saying over and over the lines of the folk-song: —

"Mine ear is full of the murmur of rocking cradles.
'For a single cradle,' saith Nature, 'I would give every one of my graves.'"

All night long I was hushed into awe by the coming of new life, and hurt by a pain that the presence of death does not give.

When it was almost morning, I heard a cry, and the words of the folk-song changed into the words of the Bible: "And so she brought forth her first-born child."

We were high over the city. It was just before dawn. In the east I caught the first hint of the morning light, and down below me I saw the roofs of the city dimly outlined in the fading darkness.

As I watched, the Doctor came out and joined me, weary, but with a look upon her face that I had never seen before.

"I never perform this service," she said slowly, "without feeling that I have been doing a sacrificial act."

I did not speak.

"No wonder," said the Doctor, "that the symbol of the world's salvation has been so long a mother with her baby in her arms. It pictures the greatest glory of all our human life."

The light grew stronger in the east. The Doctor's eyes were strained toward it, and her face was very beautiful.

"I suppose it is because it is so near Christmas time that I think of this," she continued. "I wonder why we have always tried to read a supernatural meaning into the story of the Christ-child. 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, — the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore the holy thing that shall be born of thee' — I tell you," said the Doctor, interrupting herself energetically, "that means only that the birth of human life is always sacred. We might well say at every birth: 'Go and search — for the young child — and bring me word — that I may come and worship him.'"

We watched the light grow strong and clear over the quiet city. The grimy tenement houses and the polluted streets became more and more distinct. Then the noise of rattling wheels and of hurrying feet came faintly to our ears. The toil of another day had begun.

After a time the nurse came out of the inner room, holding in her arms the newborn child. It was wriggling in the garments in which it had been wrapped. The Doctor looked down at the little purple face and screwed-up nose, and her expression changed to one of professional disgust.

"I haven't a doubt," she muttered, "that it is a poor, miserable, rickety little vagabond. Why must there be this terrible increase of population among paupers?"

CHAPTER XIX

My colleagues did not share my discouragement in regard to the East End. There was much to hope for, they maintained, from the spread of information concerning it, from the awakening interest of the upper classes in its condition, and from all our new and intelligent methods of doing good.

This was true. Each board-meeting, conference, committee-meeting to which I went as guest or member, gave me fresh proof of the growth of knowledge about the destitute, while the practical activity of individuals and of societies seemed full of promise for the poor.

There was one great Bureau of Inquiry which existed solely for the purpose of investigating new "cases." Its agents, visiting the needy, gleaned innumerable facts

that were entered in the books under heads like these: "Work, How Many? Bad Habits, What? Ill? Rent? Pay? Can Read? Can Write?"

This vast body was constantly torn in twain between a desire to find out genuine suffering, and a fear of being deceived.

Closely connected with this Bureau was the Society of Good Samaritans, who represented, not only the new knowledge concerning the poor, but also improved methods of relief. The Samaritans always sat in lengthy conference on Friday night, discussing in friendly fashion (not without gossip) the domestic affairs of the family in hand, and voting: "No Aid"; or, "Aid, $2.00 in groceries, visitor please follow up"; or, "Give Citizen's Emergency Ticket for snow-shovelling"; and again, "No Aid."

Another relief-giving society, the Almoners, differed from the Good Samaritans only in the greater carefulness of its proceedings. All its action was well considered and most deliberate. Its committee-meetings were full of anxious dis-

cussion of the question, "What do we do with such cases in District A?" and its most innocent reports were headed "Confidential!"

For instance:

"The Almoners request that the facts given below be used, especially if unfavourable, with great care.

In the case of
Abruzzi, Federigo,
No. 10 Mulberry Street.

"Barber. Six children. No work. Gave shoes and stockings."

These organizations were alike in the business-like quality of their work, in the wary kindliness with which they treated the poor, and in their thirst for accurate information. It occasionally happened that representatives of all three societies met by chance in the one room of a new "case," and gravely carried on their investigations together.

Perhaps some of the questions that these agents of organized philanthropy were

authorized to ask passed the line where friendly interest becomes impertinence. However, they but voiced the popular opinion, that "people of that sort" do not mind intrusion. Of many this was doubtless true, and a great corporation can hardly be expected to engage in character-study.

The intellectual curiosity evinced by these bodies in matters of practical detail was visible also in their theories of work. New charity methods, English, German, and Australian, were carefully discussed. On our boards were men who were familiar with all known schemes of in-door and out-door relief, and women who were masters of statistics. We knew not only the best ways of carrying on investigation, but also the best ways of co-operating with the Church, with the State, and with one another.

But here theorizing stopped. These students of social disease did not seem to doubt the essential soundness of the social constitution. Criticism of the present in-

dustrial system and of the relation between classes did not, apparently, occur to them. The Altruist's economic ideas would have filled them with surprise.

My misgivings concerning all this work did not come from the usual objections to it, that the proceedings of huge bodies are often too slow to be of use, because of the time wasted in adjusting formalities, and that the energy meant for action is dissipated in argument. I was impressed only by the hopelessness of finding out what to do. After patient inquiry the gulf between misery and the wish to help was nearly as wide as before. Facts may be facts without telling the truth, and with all our knowledge we did not understand.

This was not true of every member of the associations. There were certain women who possessed a gift of practical kindness, and were philanthropists by divine right. And surely the effectiveness of an organized body means the effectiveness of the individuals composing it.

But different attitudes were represented.

Side by side with these women who were quick to help and slow to condemn, were others who allowed their respect for the ten commandments of the Old Testament to keep them from obeying the one command of the New. They pronounced judgment on the unfortunate with the most impressive finality, as if wrong-doing were doubly wrong in the East End. As I listened to them I sometimes thought that the ethical standard which the rich try to preserve for the poor is very high.

I liked to watch these charitable women, and to wonder why they were doing this work. Some, whose faces had been made sweet by sorrow, were striving only to find expression for sympathy with human pain. Some, who looked eager, restless, dissatisfied, were trying, I thought, to find in the lives of others the absorbing interest they had missed in their own. A few, I feared, had espoused the cause of the needy for the sake of social distinction. An interest in the poor was one of the really important things, like the cut

of one's sleeves, or one's knowledge of Buddha.

I discovered a new species of benevolent woman, unlike the old-fashioned Saint Elizabeth who encouraged pauperism by indiscriminate distribution of loaves. A call that I made on a fellow-Almoner (for in an interval when my Cause did not keep me busy I had rashly joined this body) made me hope that the old Lady Bountiful armed with pity will never quite give place to this new Lady Bountiful armed with views.

I had given my friend this name because she looked so sympathetic. She was a blithe little woman, very wealthy and very charitable. On this occasion I found her just going out. As she came smiling to meet me, in her light cloth gown with gloves and gaiters of the exact shade, I thought how charming she was.

My Lady Bountiful had principles. She always performed her full social duty, and she told me, before I introduced the subject I had come to discuss, how tired she

was. Dinners and receptions and the theatre had tired her out. Yet she had given up none of her charity work. Her maid did all the necessary visiting for her.

When I set forth the object of my visit she looked disapproving. I wanted to change the policy of our Board, of which she was a director, to meet the distress caused by a sudden financial crisis. But My Lady interrupted my description of the misery of the unemployed in the East End.

"I do not believe in voting special relief for these people," she said. "Their suffering will be a lesson to them. When they have work they are improvident; when it stops they starve. They must learn thrift and economy, even if it has to be taught them in this severe way."

It was a strange situation, — Dives in his purple and Lazarus in his rags again. But Dives played a new rôle, no longer standing aloof, but coming near enough the gate to study Lazarus, and then inti-

mating that his character was not all it should be.

My Lady went on to speak of work, of how noble it is, and how little common people appreciate its sacredness. I watched with a certain feeling of curiosity the dainty figure against the rich background of the beautiful house. The fingers that were emphasizing the panegyric of work had never been guilty of a half-hour's honest toil.

"No," said my hostess, when I rose to go, "this crisis means discipline for the poor, and we must not interfere. I think as you investigate further you will find that poverty is always the result of idleness, intemperance, or crime."

"Then this distress is retributive?" I murmured. "It testifies to the negligence of the poor, and indirectly to our own industry, temperance, virtue?"

"Yes," said My Lady, firmly. She was always firm. "Don't look so unhappy," she added, as she took my hand at parting. "It isn't such a bad world, after

all. I never can see why people insist on crying out all sorts of unpleasant things about it. I am a thorough optimist, you see."

I reflected, after the cool air of the street had soothed my irritation, that we were all like that. Each one of us had pronounced opinions, right or wrong. I wondered if it would not be better for the poor if we knew less about them and cared more.

CHAPTER XX

THROUGH all my study of human misery, the thought of my little romance flashed like swift sunshine. Some of the sadness faded out of Janet's face, and every day, I thought, the Lad's lips were more firmly set in his effort to win. I wondered what the outcome would be. If his chin had not been so square and so determined, I should have doubted his victory.

Janet joined us in our expeditions. Then, as the weeks went on, the two young Bohemians took long walks by themselves, while I stayed at home or in my office, — for my Cause had a down-town office, — following them only with my blessing.

I had grown very fond of both. It was well for them to be together. Janet was waking up, as in a keen electric shock,

under the influence of the Lad's resistless energy. "There is something contagious in his vitality," she said one day. "When you are with him, you feel that you are face to face with immortal youth, and can never grow old."

In their long conversations they passed, as was natural, from the abstract to the personal. It was amusing to hear their encounters of words. Every bitter remark that the girl made was met and worsted by the strong logic and the strong hopefulness of her opponent.

She heard from him the history of his book. It was controversial. He was waging a scientific battle with his dearest friend, the author of an article that the Lad said was "all off." It had served as the flinging of a gauntlet, and the Lad had picked it up. The book was to be, he said, not only a criticism of Rainforth, but the first setting forth of his own theory, and the Lad felt that his future welfare depended on his triumph.

"Not that I can come anywhere near

Rainforth generally," he said. "He's a genius. Yes, he's the only genius I have ever known. I am simply a pigmy by the side of him. But just here I know he is wrong, and I intend to prove it. If I succeed, nobody will congratulate me so heartily as he."

As to me, he had talked of Janet and the book, to her he talked of the book and Rainforth. They had been like David and Jonathan in college and ever since. In argument they had fought many a glorious field. Now Rainforth was winning honour in the West, and the Lad was watching every step of his career with intense pride.

"You ought to see him," cried the Lad. "He fairly towers above all the people near him."

There was a touch of novelty in the situation. That a hero-worshipper should invite his hero to step down from the pedestal and do battle with him seemed a dangerous proceeding. Yet I knew that if the hero came out second-best, the worship would be no whit abated.

I fancied that Janet grew weary of hearing so much of Rainforth, but I was not sure. She spoke less and less often of the Lad. In place of the specific frankness with which he talked of her, she generalized; and because her "humorous melancholy" was so little appreciated by him, she spent it all on me.

She was talking one day of the elusiveness of life. We were always seeming to catch a meaning in it, she said, first in one place, then in another. In will-o'-the-wisp fashion it danced through religion, through philosophy, through aspiration of every kind. We went from illusion to illusion, from dream to dream. The gods (thus Janet named the hostile powers whom she sometimes imagined behind the scenes), in order to amuse themselves, had made this world as a great playground, where their creatures, cobweb-blinded, played an endless game of blindman's buff. The last and most cruel illusion of all was love.

It was then that I knew that she had begun to care for the Lad.

In the early winter my work developed so as to demand all my time. In consequence of the business depression, the suffering in the city had increased tenfold. My experiences of the daytime haunted me at night. In my dreams I climbed the dark stairways of the poor, and door after door opened in my sleep upon scenes of misery that I could not help.

I had no time now to talk with my young friends, but the sight of them comforted me. I found myself looking at Janet with the Lad's eyes. I, too, in watching her face, saw "a glory upon it, as upon the face of one who feels a light round his hair."

CHAPTER XXI

"The more I muse there inne the mistier it semeth,
And the depper I devyne the derker me it thinketh."
WILLIAM LANGLAND.

As I look back I am amazed at the amount of talking that we all did. The memory of the winter is a mist of "words, words, words."

Long discussions of spiritual questions were new to me. I had come from a world where one took God and one's duty for granted, and endeavoured to act. Here we wavered so long over uncertainties in belief that we had little energy left for work, and we talked of conflicting causes until the world was turned into a snarl of tangled theories.

In my bewilderment I found myself asking if it were worth while to try to understand.

My pretty Janet was wasting her days in attempting to find a satisfactory way of thinking about life; while the Altruist, who alone among us was content with his knowledge of things seen and unseen, had succeeded only, I sometimes thought, in thrusting between himself and his fellow-man a theory of how to treat him, and between himself and God the shadow of an explanation of Him.

Could one, after all, take life as simply as the Lad took it, waiving abstract inquiry while one attended to the matter in hand? It seemed as if he, a denier of all knowledge of God, had come very near to Him in that ceaseless, unquestioning activity.

I began to doubt even the value of our ideas about the poor.

Their deep satisfaction in existing contrasted strongly with our restless questioning of the uses of existence. Perhaps we, who were so filled with pity for the victims of life, had been better for a share in its suffering; for it might be that the wis-

dom denied to thought lay written only in experience.

Thus I decided that an intellectual grasp of things in general is impossible, then, woman-like, turned and did a little reasoning of my own.

Were there not enough strong young souls like the Lad's to break through the woven spells of theory and wake the world from sleep?

CHAPTER XXII

"— JUST to stir up stagnation, you know, and rouse interest by telling people how things really are; for it's ignorance that's the matter, sheer ignorance, and I'm convinced that if the rich can be made to understand the condition of the poor, they'll take measures to better it, so I'm trying to raise the standard of general intelligence and bring the classes together — "

The sentence went on and on. I could hardly remember when it had begun. The Young Reformer, who was calling on me, had asked me to co-operate, and I had innocently asked in what.

"— public opinion is what we want," he was saying, "and we are safe if we can get the press on our side; for it's the press that really rules the country, and not

the pulpit, and I say the thing is to get the great popular organs on our side and let them work with us instead of against us, and they will if we only use tact; for I've found that if you only use tact the thing is done."

"What special work are you attempting?" I asked.

"Oh, everything," said the Young Reformer, cheerfully. "It doesn't make any difference. When I see an evil I begin to call attention to it. You have got to be busy if you are going to accomplish anything."

"And what would you like to have me do?" I inquired, gazing at my guest with undisguised curiosity.

There was an indescribable air of aimless activity about him. He sat, in a somewhat vague and tentative way, on the edge of his chair, holding on his knee a bundle of newspapers and manuscript that he had been too busy to put down.

"Well, what's your strong point?" he demanded.

I was staggered, but it made no difference.

"Now mine is the platform," he continued confidentially. "Yes, I'm at my best on the platform. It took me a long time to find it out. I tried business and I tried the law, but I was always restless and felt that I wasn't in the right place. Then I got interested in social questions, and thought I'd give myself up to public effort."

I wondered if this young man were one of those who, finding the duties of citizen difficult to perform, condemn society.

I repeated my question.

"Oh, do anything you are interested in. Just begin where you choose, and I'll try to help you. It doesn't make much difference."

Here he smiled encouragingly.

"May I ask in what way you learned my name?" I inquired.

The slight reproof for his intrusion passed unnoticed.

"Oh, I've heard everywhere in the city

about what you're doing. I'm trying to get acquainted with everybody who is working for the general good, and I thought that if you would co-operate with me in some way it would be better than for us to work alone."

I was conscious of a momentary wish to write a manual of etiquette for reformers, but my guest looked so innocent that I forgave him.

"My opportunities for influencing public opinion are limited," I said. "I doubt if I can assist you."

"But I am sure you can," he answered, cordially. "I want to undertake something new here. I try to adapt my programme to the needs of each city. In Chicago I gave a course of lectures on 'The Crying Evils of the Day.' The press co-operated, and we made an organized attack on wrong of all kinds. I couldn't follow it up because I had to go on to another place. That's the trouble. But as I said, the great thing is to rouse interest. I know that here there's a great

deal of study of social questions, and I want to do something to encourage that. I like to be in the crest of each wave of progress. Just what are you doing now?"

I described for him some of the minor workings of my Cause. The details were dry.

"Now that kind of practical thing doesn't appeal to me," he said. "I know it's necessary, but there isn't any emotion in it. You can't get hold of the popular heart that way. There's nothing like the platform, not even the pulpit. Well, I'll tell you. I'm going to begin a series of banquets at St. Mark's Hotel to bring the classes together. I'll have one next week, and I want you to come. I'll invite some up-town people and the leaders of various movements to meet some of the lower classes, the real People, you know, and we'll see what can be done.

"There's nothing like beginning and just letting a thing get under way, and then when it's started you know better what to do. Start a movement and you

can turn it into almost anything you want to. All you need is to get your forces going."

I accepted, I fear from curiosity, the invitation to meet the People, and my caller took his departure. He stood irresolute on the steps for a moment, as if wondering in which of all possible directions he would better go. I reflected that in the battle with human nature to which he stepped out so airily, he would at least have the satisfaction of never knowing his defeat.

And I wondered who would deliver society from its deliverers.

CHAPTER XXIII

"Ich selber bin Volk." — HEINRICH HEINE.

THE socialistic banquet was a success. Various members of the upper classes were present, and several representatives of the People The Young Reformer presided with great ease.

The repast was not formal. Neither were the speeches afterward. We hastened over the material part of the feast, and our host dismissed the waiters abruptly when the coffee had been served.

As I looked around the table in the centre of the great hotel dining-room, I realized that we were a distinctly curious collection of human beings. Each one of us stood for a cause. Representatives of Church and University were sitting side by side with Socialist and Anarchist. Two

residents from Barnet House and the head of the Woman's Settlement were there. Opposite me sat a Single Tax agitator. At my left was a Knight of Labour. There were present also four prominent Trades Unionists, a Temperance woman, a White Ribbon woman, and a Populist.

Our eyes were all fixed upon the Young Reformer as he rapped upon the table and called upon my friend, the Resident at Barnet House, to speak in behalf of Socialism.

The Resident spoke with dignity.

"It is," he said, "an economic fact that Socialism is inevitable. Whether we will or no, it is coming as surely as the days are moving on. It is equally true that it, as a system, offers to the individual a justice that no other form of government can offer. Under the centralizing system of Socialism, with land and the forces of production in the collective ownership of the People, and monopolies done away, will come at last that granting of equal rights to all that democracy has failed to realize."

The speaker was enthusiastically applauded.

Then the Altruist was called upon in behalf of the Brotherhood of Man.

An abstract of his remarks can give no idea of their power. The Altruist alluded to our new recognition in this century of the close relationship between high and low. He described certain attempts, both secular and religious, that have been made to recognize this relationship. Then he set forth his hope for the future, when government shall be spiritualized, and the principles of the Christian religion shall be worked into our laws.

The address was eloquent, and the audience was strongly moved.

The Altruist ended with an appeal. The cultured must return to the People, and the People must realize that in doing this the upper classes have no sense of superiority, and are actuated by motives of purest Christian love.

Our host was leaning back in his chair, and his face wore a happy smile.

A Trades Unionist, in responding to the two preceding orators, said that it did him good all over to hear remarks like theirs. They expressed his sentiments exactly. If more folks felt that way, there wouldn't be all this trouble between labour and capital. The working-people were going to have their rights, and if these were not given, they would fight for them. But the working-man was quite willing to meet the capitalist half way and settle things peacefully if it could be done.

The young Socialist smiled at this militant formulation of the principle of brotherly love, but the Altruist did not hear. He rarely listened to what other people said.

I fell into a fit of abstraction and caught only fragments of the two next speeches. I knew, in a dim fashion, that the Populist had the floor, and was insisting that the one way to achieve universal good was by adopting the platform of his political party. I knew that the Temperance woman, who was sweet-faced and young,

rose to say sternly that we were all wrong. Only by wakening the moral forces could the race be saved. For a world given over to passion there was no economic salvation.

Watching these burdened, anxious faces in the brilliant electric light, I wondered how I could have lived nine and thirty years without knowing that this old earth, which I loved, was so very bad. Three months ago I had seen only here and there a thistle or a bramble bush in its fair fields. Now it looked to me all weeds and tares, weeds and tares.

But the Professor was responding to the toast: "The University and the People."

"There is no gulf between the University and the People," he said in a quick, emphatic voice. He had a perplexed air, as if wondering why he had come.

"The University was founded by the People, for the People. Its interests are the interests of the People. In its hands

lies one of the highest powers in a nation's life. Economic conditions, moral forces, are naught without the intellectual guidance that comes through the trained minds of a country's devoted servants, her scholars."

These remarks were sufficiently noncommittal, yet the Professor was troubled, fearing that he had not said the right thing.

The word People ran like a refrain through all these remarks, and it puzzled me. The People, it would seem, had been injured, and their wrongs were to be set right. But who were the People, and who had harmed them?

We pronounced ourselves ready to waive all differences between ourselves and the People. Who had suggested the differences? Surely not the People. Even now the voice of a clergyman was in my ears, adjuring us all, indiscriminately, to get nearer the People. I, who was conscious that I belonged to the People and had never gone away, was puzzled,

feeling a certain lack of programme in the suggestion.

At last the Anarchist arose. I had heard of him before, but had not seen him. His quoted opinions had made my blood run cold. Now I gazed at him in surprise, for he did not at all resemble the picture of him that my fancy had made. Standing with his large old hands folded, and his long gray beard rippling over his bosom, he looked like an aged apostle who was near the beatific vision.

"Friends," he said, and his voice was like the sound of a benediction, "I've heerd all you've said about injestice and wrong. You hain't said half enough. Nobody could say half enough about how bad things be. But you ain't got the right remedy. Talkin' won't do it. We've got to act. Friends, we're workin' towards peace, but we may hev to walk to it through blood."

There was a look of benevolence in his large, mild eyes as he said this.

"None of you goes down far enough," he continued. "It's gover'ment that is the root of all evil, and gover'ment has got to be wiped out."

We sat motionless around our broad table, as if held to our chairs by a spell, forgetting even to drink our coffee, which grew cold as we listened. There was an awful fascination about the Anarchist as he went on to describe the millennium of anarchy, where there should be no government, but where each man, standing as a law to himself, should seek his own good in the good of his neighbour. The oration was long and full of rambling eloquence, whose mixed metaphors suggested confusion of thought.

But the Anarchist stopped. "I hev spoke the truth," he said solemnly, "but 'twont hev no effect. 'Twill be like the morning dew, in at one ear and out at other."

There was a pause. Then we all drank cold water to the success of our respective causes, and shortly after came away.

All the way home my thoughts and my feet kept pace with those lines concerning two reformers who strolled one day by the sea: —

"The Walrus and the Carpenter
Were walking close at hand;
They wept like anything to see
Such quantities of sand.
'If this were only swept away,'
They said, 'it would be grand.'"

CHAPTER XXIV

THAT was one of the days when everybody was unhappy, everybody except the Altruist. But it was against the Altruist's principles to let the world know his changes in mood, and he may have been sad underneath his smile.

It began with the Man of the World. He came down to breakfast with a dragging step, and took his seat wearily. His face looked faded, and his eyes were dull.

"I wish somebody would give me something to make me sleep," he said. "I lie awake every night until almost morning."

A laugh went round the table. The habits of the Man of the World were notoriously conducive to sleeplessness. Late suppers too often robbed him of the slumber due his years.

The laughter offended him. He rose

with dignity and went away. When I followed him a few minutes later I found him sulking in the hall. The look of age in his blue eyes moved me to pity, and I drew the Man of the World toward me, as if he were a child.

I do not know what I said to him. It was something about changing all this, and beginning over again, without the smoking and the cards and the horses. He did not mind. In fact, he seemed to like having me touch him, and laid his cheek against my hand, very much as Jean liked to do. But he straightened up again.

"No," he said firmly, "you are barking up the wrong tree. I mean, — I beg your pardon, — it doesn't do any good. I might have done it once, but I can't now." And saying "Good morning" very courteously, he went up to his room.

I had promised the Doctor to visit with her a patient on Traffic Street, near Edgerley Bend. For once even the Doctor had lost courage. As we threaded our way

along the crowded sidewalks of the East End she bewailed her unfitness for her work. Evidently she was disheartened because she could not cure the incurable.

I walked on in silence, too miserable to speak. The air was stifling, for there seemed to be but little space between the sky and the mud in the street. Gazing at the faces that drifted past us, some bad, some apathetic, some despairing, I wondered which were the more pitiful, those that had lost hope, or those that had never known it.

The Doctor's mood changed when she reached her patient and found something to do; but I, who had not that means of relief, came home as wretched as before.

In the afternoon I went to Janet for comfort. As I crossed the street, the quaint stucco houses looked more than ever like the scenery of a stage. Through the half-drawn curtains I caught a glimpse of the Lad, and smiled. The play had really begun.

I had come for consolation, but I was disappointed. The Lad was alone with baby Jean. He looked up when I entered, and I saw that his eyes were clouded.

"Isn't it cold?" he said, with an absent-minded air.

I asked where everybody was. Jean's father and mother were away. Yes. Miss Janet was at home, and had been here, but was now up-stairs. He did not know if she was coming back.

We relapsed into silence. The Lad took Jean upon his knee. Something made the child feel neglected; neither by holding up her new bronze shoes nor by winking both her eyes could she win the Lad's attention. He had forgotten us both. Suddenly he lifted the child to his face and kissed her passionately, murmuring, "Janet! Janet!"

I escaped to Janet's room. The girl was pretending to read. Her lips were tight-set, and her eyes unnaturally bright.

"Do you know that you have a guest down-stairs?" I asked.

"It is time that my guest went away," was her answer.

"You haven't a very polite way of inducing him to do it," I said. "Child, what are you doing? Do you know what you are doing?"

She came and put her arms around my neck.

"I am finding out what happens when an insurmountable obstacle is met by an irresistible force. I cannot consent to be the Lad's wife. I am not happy enough."

"Don't you care for him?" I asked.

"Perhaps I care too much to do that," she answered slowly.

I was silent for very pity. I knew that all the obstinacy and incredulity of the girl's nature had risen in battle against this new emotion. Love had come to her, but had come like a great sorrow.

CHAPTER XXV

Of all our protégés among the "People," none interested us more than the Tailoress. The discovery of interesting characters among the poor was one of the rewards that we hoped for from our work.

The Tailoress was a tall, gaunt, strong-featured woman of forty, who lived alone on the fifth floor of a Brand Street lodging-house. She worked ten hours a day; at night she read. From the city library she had obtained stray volumes of Browning and Ruskin and Carlyle. Her comments on these books had marked individuality.

The Tailoress had been an ambitious country girl, and had come to the city to work her way through sewing into an art-education. Once she had succeeded in taking a six-weeks course in elementary

drawing. The work had been interrupted, but the Tailoress had not yet given up her hope. That was the reason why, although she commanded comparatively good wages, she lived up so many flights of stairs, and fared on porridge and tea.

She had a peculiar face, with a long nose, and strong under-jaw. Her skin was brown, despite her years of confinement in a shop, so brown that her blue eyes looked paler than they really were. I liked to see her pupils dilate when an idea came to her. They expanded, and her whole face glowed with enthusiasm.

For the Tailoress had the soul of a poet. Through all her starved life she had carefully saved up every semblance of beauty that had fallen to her lot. In her room hung a Carlo Dolce Madonna, in a narrow black-walnut frame, and an unmounted photograph of two Corregio cherubs was pinned to the wall-paper. She owned a few books: a volume of Longfellow, selections from Ruskin, and an Emerson Birthday Book. The heavy un-

derlining in these few volumes revealed an admiration deep and uncritical.

"It looks," said Janet, with mock gravity, when I told her about the Tailoress, "as if a sphere of usefulness were going to be given me. May I lead the Tailoress up from Carlo Dolce to a love for French impressionism? I will take her to see the pictures of M. Puvis de Chavannes."

"If you choose," I answered, "but leave her her books."

"Nay," said Janet, "I will take away her Longfellow and give her Amiel. Shall the poor be shut off from the sources of our inspiration?"

The Tailoress was different from the other working-people that I knew. Most of them were weighed down by a constant sense of wrong, but the Tailoress never rebelled against the hardships of her lot. They seemed to have no power over her. Perhaps she forgot them in her hunger and thirst for beauty and knowledge.

I remember some of her remarks. Once,

when some one was denouncing the useless luxury of the lives of the rich, the Tailoress looked up quickly.

"I don't feel like that," she said, in her deep, masculine voice. "Why should we grudge them the beauty of their lives? God knows what is best. I am glad that there are people in the world who can have the things they want."

We took her to the Art Museum, and she was as one possessed. I found her in a room devoted to Greek sculpture, sitting alone and silent. She rose, with the face of one greatly moved, and grasped my arm.

"What does it matter," she said, "all the suffering and the lack, in a world that has in it things like this?"

It was hard to induce her to come away. "It makes me so happy to stay here," she said. "It is full of beauty and of peace."

Doubtless it was her longing for something else that kept her from rising in her trade. After twenty-two years of work

she was still a vest-maker, never having shown sufficient ambition to try her skill as a maker of coats.

Now a crisis came in her life. She went to hear the Altruist lecture, and became his most ardent disciple. I think that he unlocked the gates of Heaven to her. Through the glamour of his eloquence she caught sight of the pinnacles and towers of the city of her dreams. Unconsciously she adopted his opinions and his tastes. Cardinal Newman's "Dream of Gerontius" appeared among the books on her table, and the Correggio cherubs gave way to a thin Giotto saint.

Her devotion was so extreme that the Altruist at last learned to distinguish her from his many other followers. He saw her strength, and confided to me the way in which he thought it should be used. The Tailoress had personal ambition, aspiration, he said, but it seemed to him hardly worth while to encourage that. She was too old. In our attempts to serve Humanity, we must utilize our forces in the most

economical way, and must work with the young. It was too late for her to fulfil her own life; she must learn to help fulfil the lives of others.

She needed, first of all, to be led up to a higher spiritual plane. There was something pagan in her thirst for pure beauty. Under his forming touch she might grow into more impersonal and holier ambition.

And there was no nobler mission for her than the liberation of her sex. The Tailoress was employed in an ill-paid industry, which was almost entirely in the hands of women. Already in her own shop she was looked upon as an oracle. Could she not learn that, in helping secure better conditions of life for her fellow-workers, she would be doing higher service than she could ever do in search for knowledge, or in devotion to art?

I, who was still at the mercy of indiscriminate enthusiasm, and had not yet learned to let other people's causes alone,

promised to go with the Tailoress to the Anarchist, that she might learn from him the social wrong from which she was suffering, and the social mission to which she was called.

CHAPTER XXVI

OUR passion for comprehending invaded even our friendships. A friend was no longer simply a friend, but a riddle to be read, a proposition to be understood and expounded. Everybody talked of everybody else, and we analyzed and dissected one another with great calmness. The temperaments of our *confrères*, their growth and change in ideas, — all these matters we tossed back and forth over many a cup of afternoon tea.

The Lad did not shine in this work of analysis. We all decided that he was no judge of character: he had so little insight into people's faults. The opinions that he formed were most astounding. To him the Man of the World was a promising child, and he regarded me as a person of firmest conviction, not seeing how I was swayed this way and that by any new

idea. In those days everything that I heard impressed me greatly.

When we were all together, we talked of our remoter acquaintances. The Man of the World afforded us much amusement, and the Butterfly Hunter interested us greatly. But when the little coterie was not complete, the absent members often became the subject of conversation.

Our best epigrams, I noticed, were made about the Altruist. It was easy to be clever at his expense.

"What I admire most about him," said the Doctor, "is his brilliant lack of logic. He is never so convincing as when he contradicts himself."

"Paul has that exclusive belief in his immediate notion which is so effective in this world," said Janet. "The difference between him and me is this: I can never believe in anything that I am doing, and he can never believe in anything that he is not doing."

I defended the Altruist. His burning zeal for good, I maintained, consumed all

minor faults. One could forgive him much for the greatness of his endeavour.

Yet I could not help admitting that the Altruist's passionate devotion to his idea kept him remote, apart from the world he was trying to uplift.

"He is rather an ingenious theory of living than a part of life itself," said Janet one day. "I sometimes think that he is like a beautiful religion that never saved a soul."

"Yes," answered the Doctor, impiously, "he ought to commit some sin that would humble him thoroughly. Then he would understand better the common experience of mankind."

"I haven't a doubt that he would do it," laughed Janet, "if he thought it necessary to bring him 'in touch with the masses.'"

It was on this occasion that the Doctor made her famous inquiry as to whether, in becoming too literally an Altruist, one ceased to be an individual.

When the Altruist was with us, we talked often of the Lad. We rarely discussed the

Doctor, because in doing so the Altruist and I quarrelled.

"There is something lacking in the Lad," the Altruist said. "He has the old Greek joyousness in mere living, but one misses the touch of the spiritual, the mystical. It is a nature that is limited to delight in sensuous and intellectual life. It has no hold on the Infinite."

"That is what the Altruist says about everybody who doesn't agree with him," the Doctor remarked afterward. "I wish that he did not confuse lack of appreciation of himself with lack of appreciation of the good."

I feared that the Altruist might withhold his approval from the Lad. The two men stood very far apart in aim and in ways of thinking. It was true that the Lad did not entirely understand the Altruist and his gallant efforts to come to the rescue of the fainting powers of Heaven; and the Doctor's suggestion that the Altruist regarded criticism of himself as a mark of mental limitation in the critic, was not

wholly unjust. Yet knowing that the younger man was not numbered among his disciples, the Altruist treated him with great cordiality.

I did not scruple to criticise the Lad myself. It seemed to me that he had parted too easily with his old faith, and that he was not sufficiently interested in my Cause.

"He stands for nothing," I said one day to Janet and the Doctor.

"O yes he does," laughed Janet. "He stands for the forgotten art of living unconsciously. He has rediscovered a lost point of view."

Janet usually refused to talk of the Lad, but to-day she took up the cudgels in his defence.

"I like that radiant scepticism. There is nothing negative about it. I sometimes think that the Lad has more than his share of the primal creative impulse that is at the heart of all things. His energy always urges him forward. The rest of us are working backward, by an analysis

that is death, as if the meaning of life lay behind us and not before."

"Janet," said the Doctor, "did you think of that just now, or did you make it up before?"

"I thought of it a long time ago," answered Janet, raising her chin saucily, but flushing, "and I wrote it down in my note-book."

Janet herself was one of our most interesting subjects at these afternoon séances. I was constantly tempted into a bit of analysis at her expense: she was so complex, so puzzling.

I have regretted since our free discussions of one another. We considered them impersonal, artistic, critical. One's friends, I have come to think, should serve other ends than those of amateur psychology.

CHAPTER XXVII

WHILE we wrestled with our problems, baby Jean wrestled with a great many that were all her own. The difference between her and the rest of us was that she said nothing.

But as day after day she watched with shining eyes the life in the street below, I fancy that the question of the Sphinx presented itself to her in many forms. Why articles that she threw from the window re-appeared in the nursery; why some people passed and did not come back, while others came back so often; why the big dog ran when the little dog chased him, — all these things were to her parts of an encompassing mystery.

Her vague wonder grew into childish thought. I watched — with a guilty feeling that I was neglecting the great things

I had been set to do — her quick development.

She found that putting her fingers in her ears kept out unpleasant sound, and once when her mother reproved her she held them there, triumphant and unhearing. She found that she could agitate the entire family by hiding small possessions. And she did this often, looking inscrutable and dignified through the search for the lost articles, then always bringing them back when the fun was over. She never forgot.

The ways of life were hard for her tiny feet. She was quick-tempered, easily angered, and easily hurt. But always, after running away in wrath and tears, she would be back again in a minute with a solemn little face uplifted to be kissed.

She was born in an age of denial, and her first spoken word was "no." With a sweet perversity she stoutly repudiated all her most ardent wishes. Even while her arms were stretched out to reach the desire of her heart, she always protested that she did not want it.

I think that I remember every one of her pretty attitudes, the turn of her head, the curves of her lithe little body.

I remember her as she looked one morning, tiptoe in her bed. It was very early; all the world was asleep. She had crawled up outside the curtain, and stood against the window, with her two hands outspread upon the pane, white as a little flower.

I remember her as she clung one day to the Lad as he was leaving the house.

"You do like me a little, don't you, Jean?" said the Lad.

"No, no, no," said the child, clasping her arms tightly about his neck.

"Ah, this is the baby," said a caller who was entering. "Isn't she like her aunt!"

The Lad's eyes twinkled, and he answered the question, which had been addressed to me.

"Very much indeed," he said gravely.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Our literary club, whether successful or not, was interesting. It embraced hard-working women who were comparatively well read in modern English literature, and girls who could hardly spell their own names. The effects of our teaching were varied, ranging all the way from keen stimulus to mental paralysis.

The activity of its committee-meetings never waned. Here we continued to debate on Life and Humanity and other abstract themes. Here the Doctor and the Altruist disputed with great plainness of speech, but with underlying good-humour.

I remember one meeting at which the Doctor began with knitted brows:—

"What troubles me in all this work with the poor is, that it is external. We turn and set them an example, and demand that

they shall conform. We impose something on them from without —"

"But they certainly need uplifting," said the Altruist, puzzled.

"No," asserted the Doctor, "they need simply a chance to live their own lives decently and to develop themselves. Their only hope lies in their natural human instincts. We cannot bring round the kingdom of Heaven for them either by preaching or by making laws. If they could have plenty of hot water and soap, and could be let alone, they would be better off than if we try to teach them our ideas."

"I do not agree with you," said the Altruist. "They will instinctively gain more delicate shades of feeling by coming in contact with us —"

I think that the Doctor was really angry.

"For true delicacy of feeling," she said, "commend me to the very poor. We ought to go down on our knees to learn of them. The kindness, forbear-

ance, patience, and the quiet heroism of the poor are almost beyond our grasp. Look at it! We haven't their opportunity for cultivating the virtues, — unselfishness, for instance. They have none of the modern methods for doing their duty to their neighbours without letting it cost anything. They know nothing about 'organizations.' They actually think that the only way to help is by kindness. As for us, humanity has been civilized out of us."

"The poor ought to be informed of this at once," said Janet, "and ought to be urged to start a society for the cultivation of humane instincts among the well-to-do."

"You do find," admitted the Altruist, "a certain primitive generosity among the lower classes. But when you say that they do not need the refining influences of culture, I do not understand you."

"I mean," said the Doctor, "that we are absurd when we talk of teaching the

lower classes rightness of feeling, for by good rights they ought to teach us. So far as I know, the moral forces are not the result of culture. They work up from below. There has never been a great reform that did not originate with the so-called 'People.' All that culture can do is occasionally to supply directing power, cold brain force, to the impulse of the masses. Something deeper than thought, in the primary instincts of the masses, keeps the race sane, healthy, right at heart."

"It is strange to hear that," mused the Altruist, "in the face of the awful degradation and the crying sin of the slums of this city. Nothing short of miraculous regeneration, physical, mental, and spiritual, can save them."

"What is it that Whitman says?" asked Janet. Then she quoted softly:

"'In this broad earth of ours,
Amid the measureless grossness and the slag,
Enclosed and safe within its central heart,
Nestles the seed perfection.'"

"That crass optimism," said the Altruist, sternly, "is materialistic and superficial. It simply ignores the vileness of a sin-stricken world."

This question, as to whether the People are more sane at heart than the not-People we never settled, for the committee-meeting drew to its close.

When we separated, I went into the corridor with the Altruist for a parting word.

"I am very sanguine in regard to our club," he said, stroking his smooth-shaven chin. "Janet will do fine work if her power can be set free. I find it hard to be patient with her unreasonable pessimism."

"It isn't quite fair to call it unreasonable, is it," I murmured, "until one knows the reason for it? We have not yet discovered that."

"As for the Doctor," — he continued, not noticing my remark, "she is a forceful woman, but crude. I actually feel that she does not understand me half

the time when I am talking. Of course she springs too directly from the People to be thoroughly fine. And our difference in belief would always make full spiritual communion impossible."

Then he looked at me, and his eyes lighted up.

"I have an idea that you comprehend me better than any of the others," he said, graciously.

When I went back to the parlour, I found the Doctor preparing to go.

"There is one thing that can be said about the Altruist," she remarked, fastening her gloves with a snap. "He may know a great deal about God, but he knows precious little about men and women."

CHAPTER XXIX

We found the Anarchist at his own fireside, playing with a kitten. Two children stood at his knee, and he was telling them stories, while the kitten made dashes at his long gray beard.

He lived in one of the workmen's houses that have lately sprung up on the outskirts of the city. They are two-story houses, made of brick, with narrow windows and narrow stone doorsteps. Standing, row after row in uniform regularity, they look like blocks made for some queer game which nobody ever plays.

The Anarchist reached out both hands to me with a cordial smile. He was doubly cordial when I introduced the Tailoress and told him why I had come.

That was right, he said, as he seated us in great wooden rocking-chairs. We were

starting a movement in the right direction. Organization alone could protect women against atrociously low wages and against long hours of work. They were now absolutely at the mercy of their employers.

"There ain't no animal," said the Anarchist, raising his arm in a sweeping gesture, "that gets so little wage in proportion to its work as half the women in this city. And that's because they don't organize. They ain't got the fraternity spirit. They're comin' on, but in one respect the men's ahead. The Brotherhood of Man is fur outstrippin' the Sisterhood of Women!

"But draw up by the fire and warm ye," he added, dropping the tone of a demagogue for a natural voice. "It's a right cold day out-doors."

The Anarchist's large, patriarchal figure looked out of place in this tiny sitting-room. His gray age emphasized the newness of his surroundings. He should have for a background, I thought, the great elms and weather-beaten porches of an ancestral farmhouse, instead of the gaudy

wall-paper and cheap, stained wood-work of this roughly finished room.

My companion did not look at the apartment. Her gaze was fastened on the Anarchist, and a look, now of terror, now of kindling enthusiasm, dilated her eyes.

The difficulty, the Anarchist repeated, was with the women themselves. They would not band together to demand their rights, because they were afraid. They did not want to do anything "unladylike." It seemed to me that under the flowery and confused style, there was much sound sense in his remarks.

"Now if you," he said, rising and striding up and down the room, with his long cretonne dressing-gown flapping about his slippered heels, "if you could influence any shop of ill-paid girls to form a union for mutual protection of each other, and to go out on a strike, for their lawful rights, which are theirs, you would be opening the eyes of the captive and letting the maimed and halt and blind go free!"

I do not know whether the Tailoress

liked the rhetoric, but the idea had taken possession of her. Her face was illumined by a new inspiration. She looked, with her high cheek bones and her deep-set eyes, like an ancient Sybil about to deliver a solemn message.

The Anarchist seated himself again in his great rocking-chair, and one of the children — a curly-headed boy of four — crept to his knee, and cuddled down on his shoulder.

"More," coaxed the boy, "more Jack and the Bean-stalk."

The Anarchist looked up at us with smiling pride.

"Is this a grandchild?" I asked.

"No, no; he belongs to one of my neighbours. The two of 'em come over to play with me since I give up work. I had to do it. What with organizin' and the conferences and the committee-meetings, I couldn't get time for no work."

I did not mean to look inquiringly at my host, but perhaps I did, for he continued: —

"The organization helps us considerable,

and my wife, she sews. We manage to get along."

I fancied that the Anarchist's wife had laid aside her sewing and was getting supper, for she was moving up and down in the kitchen. I wondered if she were tired.

The Tailoress was rapt and silent, with a Jeanne D'Arc look upon her face. She was too much absorbed to hear the friendly remarks that the Anarchist was making.

"I'm glad you come to me," he said. "I'll do all I can to help on your enterprise. There's nothin' in the world I wouldn't do for a woman."

To check the thoughts that the busy footsteps in the kitchen suggested, I asked the Anarchist a question.

"Isn't the idea of combining for any purpose contrary to your principles? I thought that the first article in your political creed was that each man should stand alone."

"E-ventually," answered the Anarchist, with deliberation. "That's the eyedeal. This is only a perliminary step. We've

got to combine first to break the bands of unlawful power. It's jest the same thing I said the other night at the banquet. I reckon I scairt ye a little then?" he queried, with a broad smile. "I don't know but what I ought to have said less, and yet I don't know as I had. Those are only my temporary sentiments."

"Yes?" I said, suggestively.

"I'm a man of peace," said the Anarchist, slowly. "A man of peace. I want to see the day when we all stand side by side, free and equal, and no man the minion of any other. That's anarchy, that is. There won't be no injestice then, for there won't be no gover'ment to meddle and mess things up. We'll all work separate and harmonious, and every man will know that his interests and the interests of his neighbour are eyedentical.

"But I tell you," he cried, starting up suddenly, and then subsiding for the sake of the child nestled on his arm, "we've got to fight to bring about this peace! The gover'ment's on our shoulders, and it's got

to be got off. That's somethin' we can't do without co-operation, and we'll hev to fight together.

"And it's comin'," he added solemnly. "The crisis is comin'. It won't be long before the worm will turn. Soon you'll see the poor worms of the dust ridin' triumphant on the whirlwinds of war!"

CHAPTER XXX

WE had a bit of good news to discuss over our tea.

A lectureship had been offered to the Lad by a great Canadian university. The opportunity was unusual for a man so young, and we were all jubilant. A very human interest in his success had survived our exhaustive analysis of his temperament. We talked much of his future.

A week went by. Then the Lad read me a letter that gave me bitter disappointment. The honour was lost, and that through the Lad's own action.

He had written, before accepting, that he was not an orthodox churchman. The authorities had replied that he could not then instruct their youth.

"That boy has a great deal more religion than he thinks he has," the Doctor

grumbled. "I should like to know where the university will get a stronger influence for good."

But the Altruist shook his head. "His character has a certain nobility," he said, "but he lacks the supreme touch of definite belief. The loftiest souls are sure. But I think the university wrong in confusing spiritual instinct with intellectual power."

The Altruist was curiously radical in some of his views.

Even I gave the Lad only half-hearted approval. He had but his brains and his forth-coming book to win his way for him, and I could not help wondering if the confession had been necessary.

Janet was the only one of us who thoroughly liked the action.

"He could not have done anything else, being the man he is," she said proudly. "He is the most delicately honest human being I have ever known."

Gradually, as we went on talking, we decided that the step was worthy of our

admiration. It was characteristic of a nature, we said, whose chief charm was a peculiar directness, mental and moral. In this lay the Lad's great strength.

The Lad lost much in this transaction, but he gained more. It was a bold stroke in the battle of love. Janet was warm in her praise, and the Lad's face began to wear a half-triumphant smile, most unbecoming in one whose hope of advancement had been lost.

It was then that the Altruist and I broke down another wall of reserve, and grew confidential over the unfinished love-story. The confession of this shames me. Hitherto we had kept it sacred from discussion. I was surprised to find that the Altruist was as eager as I for its happy completion. In our spare moments we made many plans for "the children," as we called them. The Altruist and I were beginning to feel old.

Often the Altruist, in a musing vein, interpreted to me the spiritual significance of the simple romance.

"It is said that we walk blindly in this world, and cannot tell what the events of life mean. But see the way in which Janet's nature changes under this influence! Can we doubt that her past unhappiness was sent to make her future happiness deeper? Ah, we do see and share the thoughts of God!"

I looked at the Altruist dubiously. Sometimes I thought he understood God's plans too well. Then I reflected, and decided that he was right. In the shaping of Janet's life I was confident that I too could read the design of the Almighty.

CHAPTER XXXI

"At parting — Andres — said to Don Quixote, 'For the love of God, Signor Knight-errant, if ever you meet me again, though you see me beaten to pieces, do not come with your help, but leave me to my fate, which cannot be so bad but that it will be made worse by your worship.'" — CERVANTES.

THE Tailoress learned her lesson well. She listened to the Anarchist until she was convinced that the hard conditions of her class were due, not as she had always thought, to the will of God, but to the selfishness of man, and that it was her duty to lead her fellow-workers in rebellion.

She was shrinking, timid, sensitive, but she nerved herself to her task.

She began by forming a union in her own shop. It spread rapidly, soon including most of the vest-makers in the city. The few who had good wages joined for the sake of the many who had not.

The Tailoress did the work of organization admirably, and developed powers of generalship of which no one had suspected her. Only a little while after the formation of the union the time for action came. The monetary depression, which had been causing unusual distress among the poor, affected trade so seriously that the wages of garment-makers were cut down everywhere throughout the city. The vest-makers suffered with the rest.

The Tailoress acted as spokeswoman in the committee appointed by her union to wait on the contractors for this kind of work. To each she stated her case of grievances admirably, but no one of them gave her assurance of redress.

Then she led the vest-makers triumphantly out on a strike.

I have not the heart to give the details of the fight that followed. It was a case where the employers won a speedy victory, because of the ease with which this work can be secured. In a few days many of the contractors had filled their shops with

new employés, and the work was going on as usual, while the Tailoress and her followers were adrift. Nothing had been ripe for the revolt except the enthusiasm of the rebels.

I had been sorely puzzled by the problem. The cause I felt was just, but I found it difficult to face the idea of the misery that failure would bring. I was hardly heroic enough to agree with the Altruist and the Anarchist that the defeated strikers would be sufficiently rewarded by the martyr's consolation of suffering gloriously for their faith. Possibly this was because I was acquainted with some of them.

The battle was lost, and the Tailoress was broken-hearted. Her Jeanne D'Arc courage left her. In her consciousness of the wretchedness she had caused, she forgot that her impulse had been noble. She shrank from the prophetess into a nervous, hysterical woman.

We tried every method of consolation. The practical came first, and we laboured

incessantly, seeking employment for the vest-makers thrown out of work. Two shops, after slight intercession, took back their employés, in spite of the prejudice roused by the union. Many of the women were successful in securing new work of a lower grade.

The Altruist, I discovered in an indirect way, sacrificed a large part of his private income in providing for the many who could find no employment. The excitement of the occasion afforded him a kind of painful happiness. The war of liberation had begun. He gave a lecture in his auditorium on "The Defeat that is Success."

"I am really beginning to sway these young working-men," he confided to me exultantly afterward. "The labour-movement will lose its chief danger if men who occupy neutral ground between the two parties in the struggle can act as mediators. It is full of noble impulse that often acts irrationally, and needs judicious guidance. The labourer fails in present-

ing his claims in the right way because he cannot think logically or speak efficiently. I am coming to think that my mission is to interpret the mind of the working-man."

The Doctor, though she breathed out many imprecations against the strike, helped a score of its stranded victims.

"Do you think that this kind of protest against injustice is always wrong?" I asked, rather deprecatingly, one day.

"Yes, when it is stirred up by outsiders," she answered with emphasis. "With the labour-movement itself, in spite of its terrible mistakes, I feel deep sympathy. In any demand so persistent, so universal, there must be a certain justice, a certain right."

But her next remarks were not so agreeable.

"I cannot understand how employers fail to see the trend of all this agitation, and to realize that great concessions must be made to the working-men. The peace of the country is menaced, yet the question

at issue is left, in times of outbreak to the military, in times of quiet to professional agitators, a class of vagrants who represent neither labour nor capital, and understand the position of neither employer nor employé. The burden of responsibility which the business men of the country refuse to shoulder is taken up by men like our friends the Anarchist and the Young Reformer. The greatest danger lies there."

I smiled, thinking that possibly many of the agitators were, like the Anarchist, not so dangerous as they tried to be.

The news of the relief for her companions in revolt affected the Tailoress but slightly. She shut herself up in her garret room with her remorse. We visited her, and attempted consolation, but to no effect.

At last she softened a little. One day the Altruist came to me with a grieved look.

"Will you ask the Doctor to go and talk with the Tailoress?" he said gently. "I think the Doctor might reach her as none

of the rest can. I seem to have lost all influence over her."

I promised to fulfil the request.

"I do not understand," said the Altruist wistfully, "why I cannot touch people at times like this. Before this grief came, the Tailoress hung on every word I said. I sometimes feel a sense of lack, as if I cannot get near simple human moods. It is much easier for me to cope with intellectual difficulties."

CHAPTER XXXII

"OUR elaborate schemes for helping people are making us forget," said the Doctor one day, "that the one thing human beings want is human sympathy."

To this I assented readily.

"In the first place," she continued, with a thoughtful air, "through all this machinery of leagues and clubs and organizations we are beginning to lose our sense of individual responsibility. As soon as we find an act of charity that ought to be done, we start a society to do it for us."

"But when," I protested, "has a sense of individual responsibility in regard to the poor been so strong? Social problems have never been so closely studied as they are to-day. Look at the seriousness of our young men and women! Think of Barnet House, and the College Settlement!"

"Yes, think of them," said the Doctor. "The only trouble with the residents at Barnet House is that they have too great a sense of responsibility about other people's lives, and too little about their own. Society has, I presume, as just a claim to a man's best work as the poor have to his interest. Those young men do not belong to society at all, because they do not share its burdens. 'Two men I honour, and no third,'—the man who works with his hands, and the man who works at a necessary profession. But the man who gives up all regular occupation just out of sheer benevolence I do not understand.

"And I hope," the Doctor added grimly, "that these young socialists may be spared to share the labour of the era they are trying to usher in. There will be no more of the *dolce-far-niente* of doing good then, only pick-axes and spades all round, with maybe an hour off at noon! If socialism means work by all for all, I fail to see why those who advocate it should devote themselves to an existence made of a little

study, a little lecturing, and much visiting, for scientific purposes, of popular amusements."

"Do you consider that just?" I demanded. "I do not know any men who work harder than some of those residents at Barnet House. Whether their effort is mistaken is not for us to decide."

"No, I was not fair," said the Doctor, penitently, "but I have been meditating a long time on the relation of the man with a mission to the public at large. It seems to me that no one ought to throw the burden of his support on benevolent societies. You can't take doing good as a profession: you have got to do good work. We have no right to palm off an interest in the lives of others as a substitute for living ourselves."

"You have given much criticism, and very telling criticism of our methods of work," I remarked in a tone that anger made only the more polite. "Now won't you suggest some way in which things ought to be done?"

"I haven't finished my criticism yet," said the Doctor, undaunted. "I am finding fault with myself too. In a way we all fail, and to go back to what I said first, it is largely because of a lack of sympathy. We forget that this is all-important, and keep thrusting our ideals between us and human beings. Each one of us has an abstract standard to which mankind must conform. It is equally fatal when the idea is cleanliness and when it is godliness. I suppose that it will take a thousand years for us to learn that we are responsible to humanity and not to notions."

My silence did not indicate that I had nothing to say.

"The trouble with the world is," the Doctor went on, "that it has suffered from too much lofty thought. If there had been less of that, there might have been more lofty action, and closer sympathy between man and man. We shouldn't be allowed to try to impress on our fellow-beings pure, cold abstract

notions. The only legitimate way of presenting our theories to the world is by working them out in our own lives. We haven't any right to ideals for other people. I am more and more convinced that we ought to keep our thoughts to ourselves, and give the world simply the benefit of our actions."

"That is the first constructive suggestion that you have given," I muttered. "It is good. I like it."

"We are making our problem too hard." The Doctor was very much in earnest as she said this. "It is perfectly simple, after all. We must take care of people ourselves. No organization should be allowed to relieve us of our share of responsibility. The distress of those who suffer must remain with every man a standing personal problem. So long as the poor are with us, and any one of them needs a cup of cold water, it is for us to give it, and with our own hands."

"That idea is very beautiful," I com-

mented, with hypocritical sweetness. "Human sympathy is the one thing we all want. If one cultivate it long enough, it may become so far-reaching as to extend to one's fellow-philanthropists, and even to one's friends!"

This was unkind, but the Doctor deserved it.

CHAPTER XXXIII

"Hope evermore and believe, O man; for e'en as thy thought
So are the things that thou see'st; e'en as thy hope and belief." —ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH.

JANET worked out a new theory of life. For a time she had ceased to form opinions, and I had rejoiced in seeing her ideas driven like dead leaves before the first healthy emotion of her life. Now she drew herself together and deluded herself into the belief that she had a new philosophy.

"The trouble with us all is," she remarked sententiously to me one day, "that we are always trying to convince God of our perfect intellectual clearness in matters religious, while all the time God, 'if there be a God,' knows perfectly well that we haven't the means of getting it. He

wants the kind of answer that we can give, not the kind that we cannot give."

"And what is that?" I asked.

"Action," she answered, "determination toward good, even when we cannot understand the whole scheme of things."

I watched the girl's quickly changing face with much admiration and with some amusement. Once she had mistaken her peculiar moods for speculative thought; now she was mistaking her thought of the Lad for a system of philosophy. She had translated her lover's personality into ethics.

"We keep asking questions," she went on, "and thinking that there will be an answer. I suppose that God wishes us to answer our own questions in deeds and not in words."

I liked her new ideas because they made her happy. Intrinsically they were better than the old ones. But I fear that I should have liked any thought of hers that made her face look like that. There was a light in it that I had never seen before.

"I think," she said, looking up at me wistfully, "that all the sickening sense I had of defeat — defeat before the battle — was because I stood waiting for a voice from heaven to tell me what the outcome was to be. I forgot that the voice must speak through my own lips."

"Isn't your new gospel of action very much like the Lad's?" I insinuated.

"I suppose it is," said Janet, slowly; "and yet, and yet the Lad is a positivist. He insists that the present world is the limit of all our knowledge, perhaps of all our action."

"And you do not?"

"I don't know," said the girl. "I sometimes wonder if the will to be and to be good cannot rule in another world as well as in this. Perhaps the will needs another world to realize the hope of this."

"Won't you explain?" I begged meekly. I sometimes find it difficult to understand the wisdom of the young.

"I mean," she said, "that we speak of God and love and immortality, and ask if

our ideas can be true. But God and love and immortality are not to be had for the asking. They are true in so far as we make them true."

"So you have solved the problem of the Sphinx?" I said. "It is a good solution; that is, as good as any mere thought about life can be."

"I suppose," continued Janet, "that we are bound to answer back in act to every question we can ask. We must rise to the level of our loftiest inquiry. The first suspicion we get of immortality makes us responsible for it. Henceforth we must win it for ourselves."

"O Socrates!" I interrupted, "how did you learn so much in so short a time?"

"Don't stop me," laughed the girl. "You may never have another chance to listen to words of optimism from my lips. Listen: if we can even wonder whether love works back of all the hurt of life, aren't we bound to act as if it were true?"

"You must found a school," I said. "Let me be your first disciple."

"No," said Janet. "It has all been said a great many times, but I never understood it before. The only thing that puzzles me is the Lad."

"That is simply fair. You puzzle him as well," I murmured.

"His renouncement of belief in another world to work in makes him more eager to do well the work of this one. His denial of a life to be gives him an added interest in this."

I assented, and in doing so felt that I was making a generous admission. I was usually impatient with the pseudo-scientific thought of my agnostic friends.

"But remember that positivism would have a different effect on a nature less rare," I added by way of caution.

"There is something very beautiful in it, something fine and self-controlled, yet very sad," said Janet, with a look of tenderness creeping into her eyes. "He so longs to find the most exquisite adjustment of this life to its ends, to make it a perfect artistic whole. And I cannot

make him say, with my pet philosopher," said the girl, looking up with one of her sweet, sudden smiles, "'God, love, and immortality shall be, for I am!'"

CHAPTER XXXIV

I HESITATE to tell the story of Polly. She is not fit to enter the presence of these friends of mine. Moreover, I do not know her, for I never saw her after her disgrace. I remember her as a chubby, curly-headed child; I remember her as a girl of twelve.

But her fate came to me as an awful confirmation of some facts that the Anarchist had told me about conditions of work in our large city shops. I had refused to believe them: they were too sensational. I have learned since that they are sensational enough to be true.

The day before Easter I was in the office alone, examining reports. The door opened. Looking up, I saw a feeble old man, who walked unsteadily as he entered the room.

"I come to see," he said solemnly, "if you knowed anything about Polly."

"Polly?" I said inquiringly. Then I recognized the wrinkled face before me, with its fringe of beard, and I stretched out my hand to my guest. He had been my host for two summers, long ago, on his farm in Vermont.

"Polly's gone wrong," said the old man.

I saw that grief had settled in every line and wrinkle of his weather-beaten face.

He told me the story very simply. Polly had been restless. They had grown poorer every year upon their rocky farm, and Polly rebelled against her narrow life. She had come to the city to work in a shop, and after three years had given up the struggle and had gone away with a man who did not marry her.

"I ain't never been able to understand it," said her father, looking at me pleadingly with his pale blue eyes. "It ain't in the family. I don't know how she come by it. I've always thought there must be something to account for it."

"There are many things that might account for it," I answered. "She may have been deceived, or perhaps she was actually starving, and saw no other way of escape."

But her father shook his head.

"No, 'twan't that. She had good pay, a dollar and seventy-five cents a week at Hempin and Morton's. She sent considerable money home."

I groaned. Less than two dollars a week; a dollar to pay for a room; poverty crying out in the old home; slow starvation, and the inevitable end.

"She could not live on that in the city!" I cried. "She could not keep body and soul together. Hempin and Morton's is a great cheap, gaudy shop. Hempin and Morton's women clerks are kept on starvation wages, and are told, yes, are told by members of the firm, when they rebel, that pretty girls are not expected to live upon their pay."

I was quoting the Anarchist.

"You must forgive her," I went on. "I am sure she suffered more than we can

tell. I am sure she fought bravely before she gave up."

"I ain't never blamed her much," he whispered, his cold blue eyes gleaming with tears. "Her mother was for lettin' her go. But every year since it happened I've come up to the city for a spell to look for her. I heard of your place here, and su'mised you might know something about her."

I took the old man to my home. He was too feeble to come with me in my search. Then I went to the only woman in the city who could find Polly for me.

That was Miss Hobbs, the little missionary. She lives in a wretched court, in the wickedest part of the city, down where the great Jewish thoroughfare of the East End runs across the Italian and the Portuguese quarters, on its way to Traffic Street.

She is alone except for one girl whom she has taken from the streets. Together they do what the city charities call 'rescue work.' Night after night they search

through the dives and dens and opium-joints of the city for the women who are stranded there. For every one saved from that life, twenty drift back to it. Yet the rescue work never stops.

"Polly?" said Miss Hobbs, her homely face lighting up under her Salvation Army bonnet, "Polly Nemor? That is the name of a beautiful girl I have been hunting for for weeks. We will look for her everywhere to-night. You must go with us, for perhaps you can induce her to come away."

CHAPTER XXXV

THE search for Polly was was like going down through the open gates of Hell.

Miss Hobbs left her fire burning, and her door half-opened. Then we went out through the gloomy court into the street.

In the gleam of flickering electric lights, my old feeling of the unreality of all I saw came back to me. We were in a broad thoroughfare, where night after night is played the tragedy of a great city's sin. The actors passed and re-passed. The scene shifted. We saw the leering faces of men, and heard the evil laughter of women. The sights and sounds faded, then came again, but the curtain never fell. Even closed eyelids could not shut the horror out.

I shrank back and would have given up the search, but the old man's face was

always before my eyes, begging me to go on; and the woman at my side knew no fear. She walked with charmed feet. Ruffians on the street kicked each other out of the way to let her pass; the carousers in every dance hall and saloon fell back that she might enter; drunken women rose when she touched them, and followed her home to the fresh beds that she had made ready for all who would come.

Polly was nowhere here. She must have drifted still lower. We went from the glaring lights down where, under the tracks of an elevated road, the streets narrowed and darkened and closed in upon us. We were near the wharves and the bridges.

Here is cast up a whole city's refuse. Tides of foul life, subsiding, leave here on the street, or in dive and den, the sodden-faced women who have shared the flood of passion in its fury, and must suffer its ebb. There is nothing lower. There is nothing beyond, except the river, which runs foul and slimy here along the dirty wharves.

We found a girl waiting on a street corner, alone. Under the little shawl tied over her head I saw tears on her cheeks. I held out my hand to her, and she came with us. In one saloon a pink-eyed, foolish woman clung to us, and followed of her own will when we came away.

But we could not find Polly. There was no one on any street, or in any drinking-den who looked like the woman that my old friend had called his "little girl."

At last, with hope almost given up, we turned toward the Chinese quarter.

The odour of incense floating from joss-houses, the fumes from opium-joints, made us faint and sick. But we went on, searching through thin-walled, white-washed houses, and climbing narrow ladders to rooms that Miss Hobbs, in her work of mercy, had earned the right to enter.

Again and again, outside closed doors, Miss Hobbs stood calling "Polly! Polly!" No answer came. We heard the pattering feet of Chinamen, who swarmed around

us like rats; we saw their sneering faces, and heard their chuckling laughter . . .

At last we came away, discouraged.

Nearly all night our weary pilgrimage lasted. When, in the early morning, my companion said that we must give up the search, we found ourselves down close by the water. It was dark and sullen: the great bridges overhead looked black and unholy. Even the moonlight seemed stained with sin. I reflected with bitterness that it was Easter Eve, — Easter Eve in a world that was only one great, hideous carousal.

Then, glancing up, I saw the look on Miss Hobbs's face, and my ears rang with triumphant music: —

"Christ ist erstanden!
Freude dem sterblichen,
Den die verderblichen
Schleichenden, erblichen
Mängel umwanden" . . .

We came home in the glimmering dawn, through a city white with Easter lilies.

CHAPTER XXXVI

"Of Paradys ne can not I speken propurly; for I was not there." — SIR JOHN MAUNDEVILLE.

THERE came a day that was different from all other days. Its light, I think, will go shining down through all the days of my life, to the very end.

It was early spring. We were walking, Janet and the Lad and I, along the river, where it winds and curves among meadows, inland from the sea. The first spring green had rippled over the country, and along the water-ways, tiny leaves shivered on the silver beeches and the tall young poplar trees.

Janet chattered and laughed like a child. "Isn't it hard to believe," she said, shading her radiant face with her hands, "that one can be so much alive, and that —"

"That what?" I questioned.

"That the very air can be made to shine around us in this way," she answered softly.

We were to walk to Sunset Hill, and to climb to its very top. But we loitered, and the river loitered too. It ran so lazily between its banks that we could hardly tell which way the current set.

I do not remember that we talked much. We toiled along in the warm air, with our wraps growing warm at every step, and we picked the violets and the wind-flowers near our path. At the foot of the hill my courage failed. I seated myself on a great flat rock, and announced my intention to stay there.

My two young friends remonstrated. They would wait until I was rested, and would help me all the way. But I could not and would not go, for I wished to be alone.

So I sent them off together, up the hill. They had taken off their hats, and were walking bare-headed. The wind was blowing the Lad's dark hair away from his forehead, and was fluttering in the folds of Janet's gown.

Looking across the rolling country I rested as I had not rested for months. There were hints of blossom among the cool, pale greens of grass and trees. I forgot my winter and my suffering poor, as the earth had forgotten its past in the glory of another spring.

All the knowledge of sin and of unholiness that the winter had brought me was annulled by the picture before me, of Janet and the Lad climbing bravely up the hill. How young and strong, how happy they were! What promise and hope lay in love like that!

For I knew, I know not how, that the crisis had come. I was sure that at last the unsurmountable obstacle had given way. I shut my eyes to let the wind blow on my eyelids. I was content. I wondered almost that the lovers did not envy me, for I shared the lives of both; both sides of the story were mine.

Just once I opened my eyes and looked. The pilgrims were standing at the end of the long green slope, against the pale blue

sky. I saw the Lad take both the girl's hands in his own, and then I turned my head. I had no right to watch them, even from outside the gates, beyond the drawn sword.

As I waited, I thought of the fitness of the scene. The passion and the purity of that love were one with the encompassing life of spring.

I was alone quite a long time, I think. The air grew cooler and more cool. The low, sweet piping of frogs came to me from the near river and the far-off pools. I was alone, dreaming my dreams.

The sunshine grew fainter as the afternoon wore on. It was full of a spring haze that was woven, half of light, and half of green, caught from new leaves. Presently I saw that only the tops of the willows and the young elms were in the sunlight. The day was almost done.

When the lovers came down from the hill-top, their faces were shining. We went home silently along the foot-path in the grass on the river bank.

CHAPTER XXXVII

It was almost summer.

The sound of much talking had grown fainter in my ears. Between our long discussions I had found time to stretch out my hands, and to help, in definite ways, a few of my fellow-beings. The touch of need brought strength to me, and clearer sight.

The city no longer looked like a visionary background for a fantastic play. Janet and the Lad and my poor people had made it real to me. It was sacred now with human interest.

I had learned to take refuge from abstract questions in the details of my work. It was impossible to speculate while entering the record of one day's proceedings, or making memoranda for the next.

But I shrank from the greatness of my task. Each day the cry for help was louder; each day I knew more fully my powerlessness. Sometimes I covered my face with my hands and prayed for any one of the old family ties to shield me from this mass of collective misery. If I could have again any slightest duty that was all my own! But no; I had gone out to take care of all the world, and the way was closed behind me.

I found that I depended more and more upon my friends, caring less, as time went on, about our differences in opinion. As the Doctor once remarked, we were all much better than our ideas. Even the Altruist, though it seemed to me that his zeal expressed itself largely in mistakes, gave me a kind of inspiration. It was better to blunder than to do nothing at all.

The Doctor was a constant stimulus. She walked unswervingly in the path that she had chosen, gradually softening a little under the influence of a physician's

life. Her reputation in surgery, I discovered, was making her name known beyond our city. I was proud of her.

I never knew all the kindly deeds that she did among the poor. The record of every one of them is written in her face, behind the professional mask that refuses to stay on.

Yes, the Doctor's friendship was an abiding help to me. And sometimes in my work a single incident would make me feel that for this alone I would willingly have spent all my effort.

As, for instance, when Miss Hobbs appeared one day in the office, her face red from hurrying, her eyes shining with delight.

"I've got Polly," she said. "Shall I take her to her father?"

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE Lad's book was out. After a season of anxious waiting we knew of its success. The best reviews spoke highly of its creative thought, and praised the mental keenness and the logic of its author.

Rainforth wrote a letter warm with enthusiasm. He pronounced himself and his arguments annihilated, and declared that nothing in his life had given him more pleasure than the process of being ground to powder by his friend.

Last of all came a few lines from a famous English scientist. The Lad read them and flushed hot with delight.

"I declare! This makes me feel like a great man," he said.

Then he announced that he was going home.

"I haven't set eyes on my old father

for over a year. And nobody in the world will be so pleased as he to know that this thing has gone through successfully."

He went away a few days later. The Butterfly Hunter waited with me in the parlour to say good-bye to the Lad; he was making a parting call on Janet.

"I must be away in a few days too," said the Butterfly Hunter.

"Is it a new trip?" I asked.

"Yes," he answered cheerfully. "My last butterfly died yesterday. The experiment was a failure. I am going to the East for a new collection."

Through the window I could see the Man of the World, who was standing on the street-corner, watching the passers-by. His new suit looked very fresh. The trousers were carefully creased, and turned up twice at the bottom. The Man of the World was probably waiting, though he would not have admitted it, for a last word with the Lad. The air of the summer afternoon made him more languid than ever. It was a pathetic little figure.

"He will never do any genuine living," I thought, "but will always be a spectator, bored and sad."

The Lad came back with his quick, running step. He was excited. The hair above his broad, white forehead was in disorder as he said good-bye; his eyes were radiant with pure joy.

"I shall be here again in a week," he said, as he grasped his bag, "and ready for the fray once more."

I watched him as he went down the street. Once he looked back, lifted his hat, then disappeared.

The keenness of my pride in the Lad almost hurt me. If his mother could only know him now!

Through the growing dimness of my eyes I saw him in fancy after he was gone. In his eager movement he resembled the figures on Greek reliefs of youths speeding for a prize, and always after in my thought I likened him to those immortal runners and winners of the race.

CHAPTER XXXIX

"All that was death
Grows life, grows love,
Grows love!"

JANET and I came in the next evening out of the warm twilight, and found baby Jean waiting for us with her father and mother in the library.

Janet had spoken again of the Lad's love for her. We had been walking in the deep green shadows of the trees in the park.

"I cannot understand it," she said, with a little gasp that was half a sob. "The very air seems warm with the breath of the people who love me. The Lad has made the whole world care. Even the beggars and the children on the street are fond of me."

We sat in the library for a few minutes,

talking of old things and new. As I rose to go, a boy came to the house, bringing a telegram. It said that the Lad had been killed in an accident.

A silence like the hush of eternity fell upon the room. No one dared look at Janet's face.

Presently Jean pattered across the room and picked up the telegram, which had fallen from hands powerless to hold it. She looked at it soberly for a minute. Then with a ripple of laughter she crumpled it up in her hands. She was very fond of all things yellow.

CHAPTER XL

I WENT home, and in the quiet of my own room I said that I would not let this thing be true.

I, who had been walking with the Altruist on heights where the hidden meanings of the world lay clear to view, fell into a horror of great darkness. One utterly inexplicable event made all life incoherent.

The Lad was dead. He had perished in an accident that was the result of his own reckless daring. For the mere physical delight of battling with danger he had rushed to his destruction. A life guided steadily toward great issues had ended in a swift caprice.

Now for the first time I knew what Janet had meant when she said that there is no God, but only a mocking will that makes sport of our hope and our endeavour.

Infinite irony could find no expression more cruel, I thought, as I walked up and down my long floor, than in making us the instruments of our own undoing, in causing us to tear down ourselves the work of our own hands.

All that the Lad had thought of life was contradicted by his death. It could be perfect in itself, he had said so often. Its completeness lay in finished work. And now —

I turned, sick at heart, from this place so full of tragedy and of baffling puzzles, and resolved to go back to the lanes and garden-plots of my native village. There in peace and loneliness I would try to forget all that I had known here, even this little story.

But oh, the pity of it! The Lad had walked with so firm a tread. I had thought of him as one real, moving among the shows of things, where we groped our way, uncertain of the path.

All through the winter, against the dark background of my new knowledge of evil,

I had seen him, strong in body and alert in mind, with a heart like the heart of a little child. Often, in thinking of him, I had said: "God now and then sends a man into the world who stands as a promise to the race."

I thought of Janet, and I cried out to know the meaning of the world's great waste of human pain.

The Altruist explained it all to me the next day.

He came to ask me to visit Janet. I had not dared to go. He was surprised and grieved by my mood.

"The meaning of this sorrow is very clear," he said gently, with the old ecstatic gleam in his eyes.

"You explained everything very differently a few weeks ago," I said rebelliously, when he had finished. "You told me then, and I believed you, that God was leading that girl out of her mental tangles into simple human happiness."

"Did I?" said the Altruist, dreamily. "It all looks different to me now."

"I can see that it does," I retorted in anger.

"The shock will carry Janet out of her old, cheap pessimism into conviction and into action of some kind. She will merge her individual experience in the general life. She will lose herself in great ideas. Now, at the crisis of so many great questions, she will find her work. I can see a career for her infinitely more lofty than she could have had if this sad event had not occurred."

Here the Doctor entered, interrupting the words of prophecy.

CHAPTER XLI

I WAS sorry that the Doctor had arrived in time to catch the Altruist's last remarks. She waited until he was gone, then sank wearily into a chair.

"How the angels in heaven must smile at that man's assurance," she exclaimed. "I wish, I wish he could tell the difference between his voice and the voice of God!"

I was in no mood to defend the Altruist, and so said nothing

"If the Altruist knows what all this trouble means, he knows a great deal more than I do," she went on grimly. "I cannot see, I cannot see how the Lad could so forget all the people who cared for him."

The sentence ended in a half sob that almost frightened me. It had never

occurred to me that the Doctor could shed tears.

"Have you seen Janet?" I asked, attempting to change the subject. I succeeded only in turning the Doctor's wrath back upon the Altruist.

"Yes," she said, "I have seen Janet, and I wish the Altruist were in Timbuctoo! He has been at the house and has utterly unnerved her."

"How?" I asked.

"It is hard to believe, even of the Altruist. How do you suppose he greeted that hurt child? 'Janet,' he said, 'I have always had an intuition that you were not meant for mere happiness.'"

I groaned. "He doesn't mean to be cruel," I said, "but he has not the simple instinct—"

"A few of the simpler human instincts are really necessary," interrupted the Doctor, "in any attempt to help human beings. If the Altruist had more feeling and less transcendentalism, it would be better."

"It isn't a week," I responded, "since

he had an intuition of a directly opposite kind. And then I was trying to help him," I confessed, for a sudden sense of guilt overcame me as I met the Doctor's clear eyes, "in his attempt to explain to God what He means."

The fierce expression in her face was changing into a look of tenderness.

"Go to see the child," she said huskily, "to-morrow, not to-day. She will be quieter then."

But I waited two long days. The hours were tedious and dull and heavy, full of cloud and rain. No birds were singing in the sunless air, and the grass had forgotten to grow. It seemed to me that in the ending of a life dear to me, all life had paused.

CHAPTER XLII

"For the agony of the world's struggle is the very life of God. Were He mere spectator, perhaps He too would call life cruel. But in the unity of our lives with His, our joy is His joy; our pain is His."

I DO not know what incoherent words I was saying. Janet stopped me.

"No, don't," she said. "I do not feel like that. You need not be sorry for me."

Her voice was very quiet, and her face was firm with the exalted, unnatural self-control of extreme grief.

"Do you know?" she said, "the sorrow almost rests me. I have had so much of the bitter and meaningless pain. Perhaps my quarrel with life is over."

"But this is so inexplicable," I cried, taking the girl's hands in mine and forgetting that I was there to comfort her.

"It doesn't need to be explained, be-

cause it hurts, and the hurt is life, and life is good. Oh, I tell you," she added proudly, drawing her hands away and going over to seat herself by the window; "it is only when you are standing outside, looking at life, talking about it and thinking about it, that you can say it is cruel. When you are really living, the very hurt is glorious."

I sat and watched the tearless face. The girl had been carried beyond me, out into the deeps of life where my words of help could not reach her.

"I have always been trying to reason out the meaning of things," she said, turning quickly toward me, "and nobody even told me that it is only what cannot be said that makes life worth while."

"People have tried to, Janet," I said softly, "but that is one of the things that cannot be told."

"There isn't any kind of pain," she said slowly, "that can equal the joy of simple human love."

I forgot my rebellion of the night before.

I bowed my head in the presence of this power for whose better apprehending we covet the very agony and pain of life. We follow swiftly to let even its shadow fall upon us, for if 'in its face is light, in its shadow there is healing too.'

The sunshine falling through the window turned Janet's hair into a halo of waving strands.

"Child," I whispered, "it is true. It is good just to live. But remember also that the old faith may be true. God may be, and may be love."

"I don't know," said the girl, looking up. "I haven't any opinions."

Then a mist came over her eyes, for even her new comfort was swept away by the waves of her sorrow; and she bowed her head upon her hands with the cry that has ever been the one irrefutable witness to His presence: "O my God!"

CHAPTER XLIII

We are all busy still, and yet the world is not saved.

The Anarchist is perfecting the process that shall bring his millennium to be, and the young Socialists in Barnet House are working out the details of their new economic order. The Altruist still translates the infinite into finite terms; the Young Reformer is on the platform; I toil daily in the self-same Cause, but the world is not saved.

Many times since we closed ranks and marched onward over the Lad's grave I have paused, disheartened. Full assurance has not been granted me, and it is my lot in doing battle to strike often in the dark. Yet I have moments when I know that the strife is not in vain. In these I wonder why we are so troubled

about our duty to our fellow-man, and about our knowledge of God. The one command in regard to our neighbour is not obscure. And our foreboding lest our faith in God shall escape us seems futile, inasmuch as we cannot escape from our faith.

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